

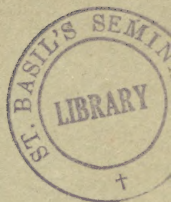
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# ONE HUNDRED SHORT SERMONS;

BEING A PLAIN AND FAMILIAR EXPOSITION OF

THE APOSTLES' CREED; THE LORD'S PRAYER; THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION;  
THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD; THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH; THE  
SEVEN SACRAMENTS; AND THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.

BY H. J. THOMAS,

CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL OF LIEGE, BELGIUM.

Translated from the French,

BY REV. G. A. HAMILTON.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION,

BY M. J. SPALDING, D.D.,

BISHOP OF LOUISVILLE.



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TO THE  
VERY REV. JOSEPH T. JARBOE, O.S.D.  
PRESIDENT OF  
SINSINAWA MOUND COLLEGE,  
THE  
TRANSLATOR BEGS TO INSCRIBE THESE  
SHORT SERMONS,  
AS A SLIGHT  
TESTIMONIAL OF GRATITUDE  
FOR FAVORS RECEIVED.

TO THE

VERY REV. JOSEPH T. JARBOE, O.S.D.

PRESIDENT OF

SINCLAIR MOUND COLLEGE

THE

TRANSLATOR HERE TO INTERPRET THE

SHORT SERMONS

AS A RESULT

TESTIMONIAL OF GRATITUDE

FOR FAVORS RECEIVED



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE HUNDRED SHORT SERMONS of Canon Thomas, now presented for the first time to the American public, may be said to constitute an epitome of Moral Theology, and of Dogmatic Theology also, so far as this is connected with Moral. The chief characteristics which mark these discourses are brevity, clearness, solidity, simplicity, unction, method and thoroughness.

The Canon Penitentiary of Liege has much to say, and he says it well, without superfluity of words or circumlocution. He goes straight to the point, and deals seldom or but slightly in incidental matter, or in illustrations not directly pertinent to the subject. When you have read one of his SHORT SERMONS, you have before you the skeleton of a much more lengthy discourse; with all its parts in their proper places, and the whole well knit together. He is terse and condensed, without becoming either dry or obscure. And withal, there is a simplicity and an unction in the style and manner, which attracts you onward, and prevents your growing weary. In a moral or devotional work this is a great recommendation.

But what chiefly distinguishes the SHORT SERMONS from many other works of the kind with which we are acquainted, are the qualities of method and thoroughness. The Canon's method is based upon correct theological principles, and he carries out his plan so thoroughly as almost to exhaust the



whole subject of Christian morals and doctrine; for many points in Christian *morals* can not be understood, much less developed, without a study and unfolding of the *doctrines* on which they are grounded. The Hundred Sermons are not on detached or disconnected subjects; they follow one another in regular order, and form a compact whole, remarkable for a Catholic unity growing out of the admirable harmony of its various parts. One subject naturally leads to another, and this to the following, in regular logical sequence. Thus the series is complete, and the amount of matter embraced in so narrow a compass is wonderful.

A few words on the method adopted by the author will more fully explain our meaning, and will, at the same time, serve as a not inappropriate Introduction to the work.

The Canon's plan is based upon a theological principle which is not new, but, on the contrary, very old and very well known. It is this: that Faith, Hope and Charity are the elements of the inner Christian life, and constitute *the soul* of the Church. These three great theological virtues lift up man unto God, and keep him united with God. They constitute the bonds of union between the soul and its Creator; thus carrying out the etymological meaning of the word *Religion*. The first bond of union between the soul and God, knitted in the garden of Eden, was broken by the primeval fall of man; the second bond, by which the manifold evils which followed the disruption of the first were repaired, was established by Jesus Christ, who by His abundant redemption thus *bound man again* to his God.

The soul has three faculties in the natural order, and she may be said to have also three faculties in that which is supernatural. By FAITH, she is taught of God; by HOPE, she is lifted up to God; by CHARITY, she is united with God. The Doctrines, the Moral Precepts, and the Sacraments, delivered or instituted by Jesus Christ, constitute the divine aliment on which these three virtues feed, and by which they are kept alive and in vigorous operation; while the solemn

warnings which He uttered against sin point to the poison which is to be carefully guarded against in the spiritual warfare.

The method of the SHORT SERMONS is based upon this idea. The series is divided into Six Parts, concerning each of which we will offer a few remarks.

I. The First Part treats of FAITH, which is “the beginning, the root, and the foundation of all justification,” according to the holy Council of Trent. It embraces twenty-six Sermons; the first two of which are on the nature and characteristics of Faith, and the remaining twenty-four furnish an exposition of the leading articles of Faith contained in the Apostles’ Creed.

II. The Second Part is on HOPE, “by which we are saved.” It contains eleven Sermons; the first of which is on the nature and grounds of Hope, and the remainder on prayer in general, and on the various parts of the Lord’s Prayer, and the Angelical Salutation. Hope, based itself on Faith, originates and elicits trustful prayer to God, invoking His all powerful and all bountiful aid in our manifold sorrows, necessities and sins; and it also inspires earnest and confident petitions to Her—“Our tainted nature’s solitary boast”—who is the sweet Mother of our Saviour God and Elder Brother Jesus Christ; and who is, by the fact, our Mother also, ever ready to look down on us with a Mother’s eye from her bright seat in the heavens, and ever prepared, with a Mother’s readiness and a Mother’s undying love, to extend to us in our necessities and dangers a Mother’s powerful protection, by efficacious intercession in our behalf with her divine Son. He whom she bore, and who never refused her any thing on earth, will not surely refuse to grant her petitions in heaven.

III. The Third Part treats of CHARITY, in its twofold aspect; the love of God above all things, and the love of our neighbor as ourselves. The test of love, given by our blessed Lord himself, is the keeping of the Commandments. Hence, after first treating in general of the love of God and of the neighbor, the author devotes the remaining Sermons of this part to

a lucid explanation of the Ten Commandments of God, unfolding the nature of their divine precepts, the powerful motives for observing them, and the practical manner of doing so with a fidelity persevering even unto the end. This is accomplished in twenty-four Sermons.

IV. The Fourth Part is a Sequel to the Third. It treats of the Commandments of the Church—which Christ commands us to hear—first in general, and then on each one of the Six in particular, thus containing seven Sermons.

V. Next to the Commandments come the Sacraments, which are treated of in twenty solid and well considered discourses. The Sacraments are the divinely constituted channels of grace, and, in a certain sense, the organs of the Church, through which its *soul*—consisting of Faith, Hope and Charity—lives and breathes in this outward world. We say *lives*, to denote that the Sacraments, though they somewhat resemble the organs of sense in the body, yet contain an internal *life*, which the merely corporeal organs have not. It belongs to the essence of a Sacrament to have a body and a soul;—an external form or organization, and an internal grace or life. The grace necessarily follows the external sign or emblem, unless an obstacle be interposed by human perversity daring to receive negligently or unworthily the holy things of God. It may be well to explain, a little more in detail, what we mean by denominating the seven Sacraments, in a qualified sense, the organs of Faith, Hope and Charity, which, as we have said, constitute the spiritual life of the Church.

Baptism may be called the Sacrament of Faith. By the early Greek Fathers, it was called *the Sacrament of Illumination*. By it we are initiated into the body of true believers, the Church of the Living God. By it and through it, saving Faith is bestowed, either actually or in its infused elements, on the recipient who opposes no obstacle to the action of grace. In Confirmation, this infused faith is strengthened by the Holy Ghost, who thereby enters into our souls and hearts, to enlighten and strengthen them for the combat. By the



Holy Eucharist, we are corporeally and sweetly united with Jesus Christ himself—the Way, and the Truth, and the Life,—and, at the same time, the Living Fountain of divine Charity. In the Sacrament of Penance, the wounds which we may have received after Baptism in the battle of life are healed; while by Extreme Unction, the traces of these wounds—the remains of sin—are removed by the holy unction with prayer, and we are prepared to meet with Hope the Saviour God in judgment. By Holy Orders and Matrimony, we receive special graces for particular conditions and callings in life.

Thus the Seven Sacraments abundantly supply all our wants, and afford us adequate divine aid for every necessity and for every emergency of life. They all thus feed the three great virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. They strengthen our weakness, animate our Faith, enliven our Hope, and inflame our Charity. They all lift us from earth, and raise us up toward heaven.

VI. After the lights come the shadows. After considering the aids to salvation comes serious reflection on the obstacles which may interpose. The work would be thus obviously incomplete, if it presented only the efficacy of Faith, the consolation of Hope, and the sweetness of Charity, with the arms of the holy Sacraments by which these virtues achieve victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh. It must exhibit along with the wholesome food the poison also, that we may beware of it; and by the side of the armory of God, the weapons likewise of Satan, that we may be able skillfully to parry them, and to turn them away harmless. Without this necessary safe-guard, Faith, Hope and Charity would fail effectually to accomplish their noble work of redemption. We would be exposed to lose these virtues in the great battle; we would fall mortally wounded, die in sin, and be lost eternally!

Hence the author of the SHORT SERMONS devotes a Sixth Part to the consideration of Sin in general, and of the Seven Deadly Sins in particular. This Part contains twelve Sermons, and these complete the work.

We are quite sure that the translation will present, substantially at least, these great elements of the original work. That it will reflect all its excellencies of style and manner, all its simplicity and holy unction ;—would be more than it would be reasonable to expect from any translation. Great care has been taken to make it as perfect as possible. Our own constant engagements have necessarily prevented us from attending to all the details ; but we have relied on others whom we deem at least equally competent to superintend the publication ; and we therefore cordially recommend the work to the patronage of the public.

The SHORT SERMONS will be found valuable, not merely to the priest who wishes to instruct others, but also to the people who are to be instructed, in the ways of salvation. They will form an excellent and most useful book for the family. Those who may not be able to assist at the Holy Sacrifice on every Sunday and Holyday of the year may usefully read one or two of these Sermons, either privately for their own profit, or in the family for the instruction of all under their charge.

Every priest and every Catholic family in the Union should possess a copy of a work so very valuable in itself, and so strongly recommended by the highest ecclesiastical authorities in Europe.



# SHORT SERMONS.

## PART I.

---

### SERMON I.

#### THE TEACHINGS OF RELIGION.

---

*John* "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, \* \* \* teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."—ST. MATTHEW, xxviii: 19, 20.

WHEN the Apostles had received the Holy Ghost, they were mindful of the command which our divine Saviour had given them, and, dividing the world among themselves, went forth, publishing everywhere, the glad tidings of the Gospel—the heavenly doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is the only true doctrine, because it alone came from God. This sacred deposit of truth, which the Son of God revealed to men, has been intrusted to the care of His Church, which communicates it to all nations. It is this holy Church that sends me among you, to instruct you in the science of God. I know your faith, your piety, your great desire to please God in all things, and I am sure that you love the word of God, and that you will come to hear it with attention and alacrity.

But, O my Saviour! In vain do I plant, in vain do I water; the land which Thou requirest me to cultivate, will remain barren, unless Thou, O Sun of Justice, deign to warm it with Thy rays,

and bedew it with the showers of Thy heavenly grace. Open then, O Lord! the hearts of my hearers, that they may thoroughly understand the advantages which Thy adorable Religion procures for them. This is the special grace I implore of Thee, through the intercession of thine own most blessed Mother.

Religion flashes her divine light upon our eyes, illumines our judgment, and leads our reason with a sure and steady step along the road of truth. Whence am I come into this world? For what end was life given to me? And what is my destiny? I see men, like myself; are we brethren? What are the duties we owe to each other? What is God? Are we the creatures of His hands? And does He watch over us? What are the duties we owe Him? What is the homage we should offer Him, and what worship should we render to Him? These, my Brethren, are questions of the greatest importance, and they should be answered plainly, solidly, and truly. But do not expect an answer to these questions from unaided reason. It can give none. This is clearly proved by the fact, that the pagan philosophers of antiquity, otherwise learned and enlightened, plunged into the most deplorable absurdities; and that the proud and conceited minds of our own age, refusing to admit divine revelation as a guide in their search after truth, have fallen into errors no less monstrous and absurd. Ask, my Brethren, your own reason and your own understanding, and what answer do you receive? None. The suitable answer can be found only in the teachings of the Religion established by the Son of God. Let us, then, give thanks to our Saviour; He is the Sun of Justice and of Truth, that hath shone upon the world, and dispelled the darkness of error and superstition. Yes, O my God! it is Thy grace alone that makes us saints as well as sages. Thou alone canst inform us of our origin, what is our vocation, what are our duties to Thee, to others, to ourselves, and what is the high destiny that awaits us in eternity. My Brethren, if you love wisdom, if you cherish truth, listen to the teaching of the divine Religion of our Saviour, which is truth itself, without admixture of error; it is the source of light to the mind, the inexhaustible treasure of peace and consolation to the conscience.

I have duties to discharge toward my God, toward my neighbor. If I enter into myself and listen to the voice of conscience, I am

constrained to admit that I have not been invariably faithful to the holy law of the Lord; that I have very often sinned. God is holy, God is just; He must therefore hate sin,—he must punish it. Is it possible for me to merit pardon from God? Is it possible for me to be reinstated in his favor and friendship? What must I do? Ah! if on this point we are in doubt, can our hearts be at rest? No. Yet, in vain do I ask my reason, and take counsel with my intellect; they are powerless to give me an answer sufficient to dispel my disquiet and to calm my justly alarmed conscience. Ah! well may I tremble; for at any moment, death may summon me before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. But thanks to Thee, O Jesus! Thou hast proclaimed to me the hideousness, the enormity, and the danger of sin; but Thou hast also announced the great mercy and bounty of our heavenly Father, who will never reject the humble and contrite of heart. Yes, sin shuts heaven against us, opens a hell under our feet, where the wicked shall be forever punished. But blessed be Thou, O Son of God! who didst come among us and burden Thyself with our iniquities, which Thou didst expiate by Thy death on the cross. Blessed be Thou, O Saviour of the world, for having left in the bosom of Thy Church a treasure of grace and mercy arising from Thy own divine merits,—the precious sacrament of penance. The sinner humbles himself, confesses his crime, makes a resolution of amendment, and Jesus says to him, by the mouth of his priest: “Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace,” and peace and innocence reënter the heart of the poor sinner.

When you witness the disorders which prevail in the world, you are troubled and confused, you murmur and complain at the unequal distribution of riches and enjoyments, of good and evil in this life. But listen to the teachings of Religion; it is in this school you will learn to confide in divine Providence, and in the love of your heavenly Father, whose ways and designs are as far above the thoughts and designs of men, as heaven is above the earth. It is in the school of Religion, and here only, that we can learn to a certainty, the wisdom of God, who rules, disposes, regulates, and penetrates all things, from one extremity of the universe to the other, with an infinite power, with admirable sweetness, with an unbounded love for our greater good, and especially for our eternal salvation. Receive,



therefore, with all humility and submission, the lessons which Religion teaches us, and your discontents will cease, your murmurs will subside, peace and happiness will be restored to you, and in your pains and sorrows, you shall be favored with many heavenly consolations.

And who is the man that does not stand in need of consolation? Who is the man that has not to travel the road of affliction? Ah! how numerous, how various are our sufferings and our crosses? Who can enumerate the pains, both inward and outward, the afflictions of the body, the tribulations of the soul, and all the troubles which press so heavily upon mankind? Groaning under the weight of sorrows, who will come to apply to us the balm of consolation? You tell me to have courage; but where shall we obtain this courage so necessary to support us? Yes, you would come to inspire me with courage and give me strength, but you are unable. Religion is our only true comforter, the only source of consolation and of true courage. Religion tells me: Sufferings come from God; He chastises you, because He loves you, that you may expiate your sins, and that you may be rich in merits before you receive the rewards of heaven. Ah! if you knew the great value of the cross and of sufferings, you would be prepared to say with St. Augustine: "I weigh well what I suffer along with what I hope for, and I find the weight of my sufferings infinitely lighter than the weight of glory which my afflictions will procure for me. Here below we drink but a little drop of the bitter waters of tribulation; but in heaven we shall be overwhelmed with the overflowing fountain of unspeakable delights." Thus it is that the adorable Religion of Jesus Christ pours into the suffering and afflicted heart the balm of consolation, fills us with a holy hope, and points us to heaven as the reward of our patience.

Life is like a flower, which in the morning blooms, and in the evening fades. Every day, death strikes at us on every side, and it may at any moment arrest us in the midst of our career. Very soon I shall descend to the tomb; but am I nothing more than dust and ashes? Is my soul as well as my body subject to death? If my soul survives, whither shall it go, and what shall become of it? The prince of philosophers has said with despair: "I do not know what will take place after death." But, my Brethren, the Son of God came down from heaven to reveal our future. No, no, the

existence of man is not confined to the limits of this short life. Do you believe that the only being of creation whom God has endowed with superior faculties, the only one who stands erect and looks toward heaven, shall be nothing but dust and putrefaction! You have a soul which is immortal, and which has nothing to fear from the corruption of the grave; it came from God, and to God it must return. The darkness which surrounds us in death shall not be eternal, you shall rise full of life. Happy shall you be if you are not attached to the vanities of the world; if you are faithful to God and to His holy Religion, if you live as true Christians; for then you shall inhabit the place where our divine Chief dwells, you shall participate in the glory of God, in the happiness of His elect. How consoling a hope! And this hope is laid up in my heart! O, how I love and bless thee and the good things thou containest, O, adorable Religion of my Saviour! It is this Religion, built upon the word of God, which makes known to us the goodness of our heavenly Father, our own dignity and greatness, and the felicity that awaits us in heaven.

My Brethren, the teachings of the Religion of Jesus Christ, imparts truth to our minds, gives a calm peace to the repenting sinner, reveals the future, and fills us with hope. In order to learn this wholesome doctrine, the people crowded with eagerness around our divine Saviour. These are the same precepts, which our Lord charges me to teach you. I shall acquit myself of my holy mission with all the zeal of which I am capable, and I shall do so with pleasure and success; for you too are eager to learn the word of God. May the kingdom of truth be established in your hearts and minds, may you know God and His divine Son, your duties and your destiny; may you know the way which will conduct you to the practice of virtue, to wisdom, to perfection, to heaven. My God! bless my efforts. Let Thy grace accompany my words, or rather place upon my lips the words which will best make Thee known, loved and served, by every one whom Thou desirest that I should lead into the way of Thy adorable truth and commandments, that they may be found worthy of the infinite reward which Thou dost reserve for us in in a blessed eternity.—AMEN.



## SERMON II.

ON FAITH.

---

"But as many as received him, to them he gave power to be made the sons of God, to them that believed in his name."—ST. JOHN, iv : 12.

THE time of this our present life, is granted to us, in order that we may know, love, and serve the Lord our God. If we employ, in this holy exercise, the few days which we have to spend in this world, we shall most certainly merit and obtain an immortal life in the mansions of our heavenly Father. But those only know, love, and serve the Lord, who believe in the name of Jesus, the Son of God made man, follow His doctrine, do what He commands, and hope for what He promises. How important, then, it is for you to know this salutary doctrine, this divine religion, the practice of which, enlivened and sanctified by the love of God, leads to celestial happiness. But Faith is the light, without which, as St. Paul teaches us, we can neither discover, invoke, nor serve our God. I shall, therefore, commence the course of instructions on Christian doctrine, which I propose giving you, by treating of Faith in general; and afterward, I shall explain the principal truths which the Saviour has revealed to the world, and which are contained in the Apostles' Creed.

What is Faith? Faith is a gift of God, and a supernatural virtue, by which we firmly believe in God and all the truths which the Church teaches, because God, who has revealed them, is truth itself. It is important, my Brethren, that you thoroughly understand the definition of Faith. I therefore proceed to explain all its terms and words:

In the first place, I say, Faith is a *gift of God, and a supernatural virtue*: that is to say, Faith comes not from ourselves, it is not our

own production; we can never have it in our hearts, except through an effect of God's goodness and liberality. It is a *supernatural* virtue; we can not acquire it by our natural powers alone, it can come only from heaven. In fact, says the Apostle, "it is by grace you are saved through Faith, and this not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory."\* Faith comes from God, and without Faith we can not be saved. No, the Holy Ghost says, "without Faith it is impossible to please God." The wrath of God falls with all its weight upon the children of incredulity. These words are but the development of what Christ himself teaches us, when He says, "whosoever will not believe, shall be condemned;" he is already judged, he is criminal, his infidelity itself is his condemnation,—he is dead before God. O how happy are you, my Brethren; you who have received the Faith, this precious gift of God! It is a grace which the Lord has not granted to so many other nations, to whom he has not "made known his wonders."†

You have Faith; God has given it to you; but to what are you indebted for this privilege, this power of pleasing God? What have you done to render yourselves worthy of it? Did your works obtain this favor for you? Or rather is not Faith the principle of all your meritorious works? You are indebted for this precious gift to the goodness and favor of God. You can never be sufficiently thankful to the Creator, to Jesus, the Son of God, "for no man can go to the Father except through the Son." In fact, the very day on which you became Christians, and received the gift of Faith at the baptismal font, there were millions of children born throughout the whole extent of the earth, who had not the same happiness you had; they were born in barbarous and idolatrous countries, in nations where the knowledge of the true God is shrouded in the darkness of the most monstrous errors. Many are dead and they shall never see God; others, blinded by superstition and vice, hurry on to their eternal perdition. Why were you not born in these countries? Why did you not die in your mother's womb? Why have you been preferred to so many others? "Virgin of Israel," saith the Lord, "I have loved thee with an eternal love; behold the

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\* Ephesians, ii: 3.    † Psalm cxlvii.

reason why, taking pity on thy misery, I have raised thee up even unto myself." See Christians; even before you had power to think of Him, God loved you; this is the reason why "he has snatched you from the powers of darkness, that he might receive you into the empire of Jesus Christ, His well beloved Son, by whose blood you have been redeemed." Bless and glorify the hand which has heaped upon you so many favors; return thanks to God for His goodness, who has so tenderly loved you, adore His word, and believe in Him, but believe *firmly*.

In the second place, I say that Faith is a gift of God, and a supernatural virtue, by which we believe *firmly*. When a Catholic says: "I believe;" it is as if he said, "I am sure there is nothing but truth in every thing which the Church of Jesus Christ proposes to my belief, and I believe the word of God more firmly than I would believe the testimony of my own eyes, and the judgment of my own reason. It is God who speaks and reveals the truth which is in Him from all eternity. Can I refuse to hear my God? No; I make my understanding captive unto the obedience of Faith, and my will unto the yoke of the law. "This word comes from God;"\* it must be believed; I bow down before God with a willing heart; His truth conquers me; doubt is driven from my mind; retreating before the certainty which God himself establishes in my soul. Yes, Christians, we must believe firmly, for it is in God we believe; in God, who is supreme wisdom, infinite goodness, truth itself; who can neither be deceived nor wish to deceive us, and who, whilst conducting us by the hand of His infallible Church, will never permit us to fall into error and illusion.

In the third place, I say by Faith we believe in God "and all the truths which the Church teaches; because God, who has revealed them, is truth itself." God expressly commands that we should believe all the dogmas and all the truths which he has revealed, and which the Church proposes to our Faith. He wishes and requires that we should believe with equal confidence every word He has spoken. For, he who refuses to believe even one single article of religion, no longer possesses the precious gift of Faith. What! Could God permit man to receive only some of His truths, and leave him free

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\* Genesis, xxiv.



to despise and reject others with scorn? No, the man that presumes to exercise a liberty so injurious to God, ceases to believe the word of God, the eternal truth; he has no Faith, he follows his own opinion, and not the doctrine of God; he grounds himself no longer on the veracity of God, on the infallible evidence of His Church, but on the fallible testimony of his own judgment. He wishes to make God an impostor; he has no real Faith; the light of God no longer sheds its enlivening rays upon his mind.

But, my Brethren, let us not deceive ourselves; there are degrees of Faith. It may be more or less fervent, more or less strong, without ceasing to be the Faith that comes from God—the true Faith. The Faith of that father mentioned in the Gospel, who exclaimed,—“I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief,” was weak, though true, and pleasing to God. Such also was the Faith of the disciples, when they said to their divine Master, “increase our Faith.” Faith is a virtue, and, like all other virtues, it must be proved by trials in the heart of man. Hence, we can not but know that our minds will be frequently tormented by involuntary doubts, which come in despite of us, and render us a prey to violent agitations, by which our soul is oppressed and afflicted. The greatest saints have not always been exempt from these trials. Like them, let us courageously resist all such temptations which test, but do not lessen our Faith. Coming out of the contest victorious, we shall be dearer to the heart of God. Above all, my Brethren, let us guard and watch diligently over this precious gift of Faith which God has granted us, and let us never permit any willful doubt to enter our minds; for by willfully doubting the truths of Faith, we call in question the veracity of God himself. To consent to doubts and entertain them in our hearts, would effectually expose our Faith to that sad shipwreck of which the Apostle speaks—a misfortune that would plunge us into the abyss of eternal death.

It is necessary to believe every thing that God and his Church propose to our belief, whether they are the doctrines found in the sacred books, or the truths which holy tradition has handed down to us. The Sacred Scriptures are the word of God, and they contain nothing but what is true; but they do not embrace all revealed truth. The Sacred Scriptures themselves say that there are many things which our Saviour and Apostles said and did which were not

written. Yet not one *iota* of these truths coming from the mouth of God is lost, or ever shall be lost. No, God has not permitted it; on the contrary, he willed that all these words and truths should pass from mouth to mouth, and should be preserved in the bosom of his Church. These dogmas are all equally true, all equally the word of God, and when the Church of Jesus Christ proposes them to us, we ought to believe them firmly, without hesitating, without doubting, if we desire to keep the Faith which pleases God, and the Faith which comes from God.

God grant, my Brethren, that the instruction which you have just heard may be deeply engraven upon your memory; may you never forget that which, as Catholics, you are bound to believe in heart and soul; may you never lose sight of the obligations you are under to God, for the great benefit of your vocation to the true Faith, for the preference which He has shown you in distinguishing you from so many others, who live and die in the darkness of error. O yes, praise the Lord all the days of your life; let your hearts and tongues extol and glorify continually the goodness of the heavenly Father, who has bestowed this precious gift of Faith on you, who did nothing and could do nothing to merit such a divine favor. To know God; the adorable mysteries of His Son made man, the riches of the glory He prepares for us, this is the science of the Christian,—the science which Faith teaches. Without this heavenly science we should be buried in misery and darkness, the melancholy sport of uncertain opinions and deceitful fancies which the spirit of man conjures up.

May God preserve us from falling away from this divine, adorable Faith. It is in this Faith, O my God, that I wish to live and die; for it is only through it I can learn to do thy will. May Thy Grace, O Lord, be always with me, that I may never cease to fulfill what Thy holy religion commands; so that I may be one day admitted to the happiness of seeing Thee, face to face, such as Thou art in Thy eternal mansions, where Thou wilt fully recompense those who have known Thee, loved Thee, and served Thee in this world!—AMEN.



## SERMON III.

## FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

## EXISTENCE OF GOD.

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."—

APOSTLES' CREED. *4 my Creed*

It is necessary to believe every thing that God has said and revealed to the world, all the truths which the Lord has intrusted to the guardianship of his Church; for without faith it is impossible to please God; without faith no one can be saved. How ardently, then, beloved Christians, do I desire that you would know well the truths which are the object of your faith. You find them, for the most part, contained in the Apostles' Creed, which is composed of twelve articles, the first of which is thus expressed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." There are so many things contained in these few words, that I can not treat all of them in one instruction. I will, therefore, confine myself to-day to the explanation of these words: "I believe in God;" that is to say, my Brethren, what I wish to impress upon your minds, is, that there is a God, that there is but one God; and what that one God is:

There is a God: this is the first truth which we profess to believe when we recite the Creed, a truth which is the foundation of all the other truths of religion, and of salvation; a truth which nature as well as religion alike inculcate; a truth better known than all others, and which is as clear to our eyes as the light of day. Hence, we always regard as monsters, rather than men, that small number of wretches who arrive at such a height of impiety that they dare deny or even doubt that there is a God. If they have the hardihood to say so, "it is only in their heart," saith the prophet. Indeed, the corruption of their hearts makes them desire that there were no

God, that they may with greater ease and freedom abandon themselves to the disorders of their passions; but their intellect never admits such an absurdity, and always convicts them of their lying blasphemies.

In fact, my Brethren, to convince us of the Existence of a God, it is not necessary that we should enter into tedious researches, and have recourse to laborious studies; it suffices to contemplate ourselves attentively, to cast a glance over this vast earth, on the millions of creatures that inhabit the world. Yes, says Isaias, "Lift up your eyes on high; consider who has created the heavens, who caused the army of stars to move in such beautiful order, and who calls them by their names." Who, then, has fixed this earth upon its foundation? Who has constructed the spacious firmament on high,—that wonderful ceiling dotted all over with stars, as so many precious stones? Did man give existence to himself? Did the sun and moon fix themselves in the firmament? "Do you know who is the Father of the rain, or who begot the drops of dew? Ah! the world is a great book, which speaks to us only of God; the voice of the Supreme Being resounds from one end of the universe to the other, and says: "I am the Lord; that make all things; that alone stretch out the heavens; that establish the earth; and there is none with me."†

It is God, who has made every thing, and nothing was made without Him. Every man who does not recognize Thee, and who presumes to deny Thy existence, O, my God, is blind, is an ungrateful wretch, is a monster without eyes, without ears, without intellect, and without heart. Yes, if he has eyes let him open them, and everywhere he will see evidences of Thy wisdom, O, my God, and the wonders of Thy Omnipotence! If he has ears to hear, why does he close them against the voice of every creature that proclaims the greatness of its Creator? Has he received from heaven the gift of intelligence; he, who, more stupid than beasts, disowns *Him* to whom he is indebted for every thing? And where, then, is his heart, since he is insensible to the ineffable bounty for all the blessings which he constantly receives from this adorable Providence, that confers them on him?

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\* Job, xxxviii.

† Isaias, xliv.

Yes, my Brethren, there is a God, there is but one God, and there can be no more gods than one. In truth, God is the Being above all beings; the Infinite Being; the perfect Being. That perfection can not be divided; infinity appertains to but one Being alone. Were there many infinitely perfect beings, none of them would possess perfection, since they would all be equal; none of them would be superior to the others, none would be Sovereign Master; and we can with reason say, if there were many gods, there would be none, for a plurality of gods were an idle fancy, a thing that exists not. Says the prophet of God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is the only Lord. I am, says he, the first and the last, there is no God besides me."\*

There is but one God. You must not however imagine, my Brethren, that the unity of God is opposed to the adorable mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. It is true, faith teaches us to acknowledge and adore three Persons in the Most Blessed Trinity, three Persons in one God; yet, there is in this no contradiction. Indeed, we do not say, there are three Gods in one God; but there are three Persons, who constitute but one God. In the Most Blessed Trinity there are not three divine natures, but only one and the same divine nature for the three divine Persons. Yes, my Brethren, always bear in mind, that the three divine Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity have but one and the same divine nature, and are but one and the same God. I know that this is one of those truths which reason of itself cannot comprehend, experience teach, nor the senses assist us to discover; it is a mystery the depth of which, it belongs to God alone to fathom. "No one knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.† But what ought to set our minds at rest, and free us from all uneasiness, is, that God himself has revealed this august mystery, and His divine word is our guaranty for this profound truth. He has said: "There are three in heaven who give testimony,—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,—and these three are one.‡

But what is God? The day will come when, in heaven, we shall know God and see His infinite perfections in the clearest light. In

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\* Isaias, xl and xliv.

† St. Matthew, xi: 27.

‡ St. John, v: 7.



this life we behold Him only through a glass and in shadows. Yet, however imperfect our knowledge may be, faith and reason throw sufficient light around us, to demonstrate to us that God is a Spirit infinite in all His attributes; that He is self-existent, and that He is from eternity. God is infinite, therefore He wants nothing; and there is in Him not even the smallest defect, nor the slightest imperfection. He is perfect; there is in Him neither sleep, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor anger, nor sadness, nor suffering, nor death; none of these imperfections are to be found in the infinitely perfect nature of God.

God is from all eternity; He was not created by himself; neither could He have been created by another. If God created himself, He must have existed before He created himself, which is a palpable absurdity. If God was created by another, tell me by whom this other was himself created? How, then, does God exist? The Almighty himself informs us, when He says to Moses: "I AM WHO AM"—that is to say, I am the necessary, infinite, eternal Being, the Source, the beginning of all other beings; Life, and even Existence itself.

God is a being perfectly simple; He is a perfect Spirit; He has neither body, nor figure, nor form. He does not come under our senses; He can neither be seen, nor touched. If the picture of God the Father represents Him under the form of an old man, it is to give us an idea of His adorable antiquity, and because He showed himself in this form to the prophet Daniel. If the Sacred Scriptures speaks to us of the eyes, the feet, and the hands of God, it uses such language only to accommodate itself to our weakness. These are no more than figures which serve to make us understand the perfections and attributes of God. By His eyes is signified that He sees all things; by His hands that He made all things; by His arms is understood His supreme power; and we express as far as possible His dignity, by placing all creatures at His feet.

But at the same time, the word of God warns us not to conceive a false idea of God, by supposing Him to have a human form, giving Him a human body and senses, or by believing that He is, as it were, confined within the vast and magnificent palace of this world. God is a Spirit; and therefore He desires to be adored in spirit and in truth. He wishes that our minds should be constantly

raised toward Him, and that our hearts should be penetrated with His love, when we contemplate and meditate upon His infinite perfections. He wishes that, like generous children, we should have for Him the deepest respect and the most perfect submission to His ever adorable will. He wishes that, by a faithful discharge of all the duties of our state, we may merit His favor and His love.

There is a God: He is perfect, He is infinite. O my soul, bless the Lord, and may all that is within me praise His holy name! Yes, O Lord, I am the work of Thy hands, and my soul and my body shall never cease to publish Thy greatness and Thy goodness. Alas! can it be possible that there are men who refuse to recognize Him, by whose omnipotence they were called into existence! Can it be, that there are others who, though acknowledging that there is a God, yet live as if they knew Him not; do not love Him, nor serve Him, nor wish to do any thing to please Him.

Let us not, O my God! be amongst the number of those ungrateful wretches; on the contrary, let us bless Thee all the days of our lives; let us praise and glorify Thee on earth, which is Thy footstool; that we may merit the happiness of being one day admitted to praise, and bless, and love Thee forever in Heaven, where Thou hast established the "Throne of Thy Glory."—AMEN.



## SERMON IV.

FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED—(CONTINUED.)

## OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD.

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*Longfellow*  
 "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."—APOSTLES' CREED.

THERE is a God, there can be but one, He is self-existent, He exists from all eternity, He is the principle and author of all things in heaven and on earth. God is a Spirit infinitely pure, has neither body nor figure, and he possesses every perfection in an infinite degree. Behold, my Brethren, what formed the subject of our last instruction. I most ardently desire that you would every day make some progress in the knowledge of the Lord our God, for the more you know Him, the more will you love Him, and the better will you serve Him. It is for this reason that I now proceed to explain some of the infinite and unspeakable perfections of our Creator. To-day I will speak to you of His Omnipotence, and I will show you how useful it is often times to meditate on this wonderful perfection.

God is Omnipotent, that is to say, He can, in one single instant and without labor, do whatsoever he pleases. This is a truth which faith does not permit us to doubt, and of which we can not help being thoroughly convinced, when we survey the vast and magnificent expanse of creation, and contemplate the harmonious order which reigns throughout all nature.

Who indeed among you can measure, with his sight, the immense extent of the canopy of heaven ; can consider the beauty of the sun, and of the millions of stars which adorn the firmament ; can fix his attention on the numberless beautiful animals, so varied in their different kinds and species, which move on the earth, fly in the air, or swim in the waters ; can even for an instant fix his atten-

tion on the astonishing variety of trees, of flowers, and of fruits which cover and embellish the surface of the earth; which of you, I say, can behold this magnificent spectacle without feeling himself constantly impelled to exclaim, Oh! boundless grandeur! Oh! infinite Omnipotence of my God! Yes, the Lord our God is all-powerful. The Sacred Scriptures, which the Holy Spirit dictated to man, not only teach us that it is the hand of God which fashioned all we see,—every thing that exists,—all the wonders which challenge our admiration, but even that it has created them all, has made them all out of nothing.

The human mind is no doubt, occasionally, capable of great things. Well; now collect from the four quarters of the globe the ablest minds, men endowed with the highest degree of intelligence; and certainly many such might be found. Then, when you have them all assembled, ask them to unite their efforts and work together, but without materials, without tools; by the sole power of their minds and wills, and what will they produce? A world? No; not even a grain of wheat, not the smallest atom of straw. What? Do you think they could construct a new canopy for the heavens? No, not even a hut. They would labor for millions of years, and for millions of ages, and yet never produce one. The power of the Creator, is then infinite, for it needed not matter and instruments to construct this beautiful world. Without trouble and without labor He has created heaven and earth; God wills, He spoke, and the universe sprang from the abyss of nothingness. “I am the Lord,” He says, “that made all things, that alone stretch out the heavens, that establish the earth, and there is none with me.\* Yes, my Brethren, to execute the decrees of His wisdom, to realize the eternal plans of His infinite intelligence, God requires neither matter, nor instruments, nor aid, nor help from any one. He speaks, and on the instant millions of creatures spring into life; He has but to will it, and that very instant they would fall back into the nothingness from which His voice had called them. He created all things with equal ease, and it costs Him no more to produce a world than to form the smallest seed,—the tiniest insect. Without trouble and without labor, He has created the heavens and the earth; without

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\* Isaiah, xlv : 24.

trouble and without labor, He preserves the existence He has given them, and maintains the wonderful order in which He has established them; without trouble and without labor, His hand peopled the world with an immense variety of sentient, animated beings; a word was sufficient for Him. By a single word, all these animated beings are multiplied and perpetuated on the earth. Another word issues from His divine mouth, and, faithful to the command of the Creator, the sun advances, shining in the heavens, the moon begins to shed her mild effulgence, and the stars bedeck the firmament; a word, and not one of these stars ever forget the command, but will please God; they will continue to move in the path which His divine hand has marked out for them.

It is therefore true that God is Omnipotent,—His power is infinite,—knowing no limits; He can do whatsoever he wills!

God is Omnipotent! O! how consoling a truth for the suffering, afflicted, disconsolate heart of man! God, he can say, is all-powerful, He can do whatsoever He wills, and nothing is able to resist the strength of His arm; it is then true that He can cure me of all my ills; if I am sick, He can heal me; He can extricate me from the miseries and oppressive sorrows beneath which I groan; He can protect me against the repeated assaults of my enemies; He can assist me with His power, and cast around me the shield of His divine protection in the daily contest which I have to wage against the world, the devil, and the flesh; He can, in fine, give me the victory and confirm me in the pathway of virtue and of piety. But where are the proofs of this consoling truth? Open the Sacred Scriptures, and they are full of striking examples more than sufficient to banish every doubt from your minds. Who was it that rescued Joseph from the dreary and shameful prison, wherein he had so long groaned? Who broke asunder his fetters and elevated him to the position of chief minister to the powerful king of Egypt? It was God. Every kind of misfortune was heaped on the head of Job; deprived of his children and his wealth, plunged into the most frightful desolation, his body covered all over with a loathsome, consuming disease. Who came to the assistance of this holy man, and restored him to health and to redoubled prosperity? It was God. An impious king usurps the rights of God, and, in his folly, commands the people to adore him. Three young men refuse to bend



the knee before his statue, and they are cast into a burning furnace ; but behold, they walk uninjured in the midst of the devouring flames. Who was it that thus miraculously preserved their lives and deprived the fire of its power to harm them ? It was God,—the Omnipotent God. Famine spreads desolation over the land of Israel. The prophet Eliseus, flying from the enemies of the Lord, retires into the desert, there to die of hunger. But he dies not ; for behold, the Lord commands the birds of the air to provide for His servant, and every day they carry to him food to support his life. Two infamous old men drag the chaste Susannah before the judges of Israel, and accuse her of crime. Sentence of death is pronounced against her ; but Susannah dies not ; for the Lord, the God of justice, enlightens the mind of the youthful Daniel ; the innocence of the chaste virgin is recognized, and the sentence which threatened her life falls on the heads of her guilty accusers.

Behold what the Lord has accomplished, and the wonders wrought by Him, to whom nothing is impossible, and who can do whatsoever He willeth.

God is all-powerful ! But if this truth abounds in consolation for the righteous and the just, it is no less terrible and afflicting to the wicked and impenitent sinner. For if God can do whatsoever He wills, if all things are possible to Him, He can punish the wicked in a terrible manner ; if He spare him, it is only because His mercy stays the arm of His justice. And what reason has not the sinner to tremble ? God beholds him advancing in the paths of iniquity, He sees him filling up the measure of his guilt, and tomorrow, perhaps, He will call him before His awful tribunal, to condemn him to everlasting punishment.

Yes, sinners, God can and He has punished sin, and continues to do so every day. Do you doubt it ? The Sacred Scriptures will inform you how severely God has often dealt with the sinner. Nadab and Abiu, the sons of Aaron, contrary to the express prohibition of God, dared to set profane fire on the altar, and burn their incense upon it. God condemns them, and that very instant flames issue from the earth and destroy them. Forty-two youths follow and mock the prophet Eliseus, and at the command of God two bears from the depths of the forest rush on these forty-two wicked young men, and devour them. Heliodorus, possessed of all the power of



an earthly monarch, enters the temple of Jerusalem, to rob it of its treasure and desecrate the holy places of God; but the King of heaven gives the word, and immediately two angels appear, and strike Heliodorus so severely that he is carried away half dead.

You see, my Brethren, how true it is that the Omnipotent hand of God can punish us even at the very moment we are abandoning ourselves to sin. Let us, therefore, be wise and prudent, and when temptation presents itself to draw us from the path of rectitude, let us raise our thoughts to heaven and call to mind the Omnipotent power of God, who can, the very instant we consent to the sin, most terribly punish us for all eternity. Beyond doubt, this recollection of the judgment of an Omnipotent God will make us fear and avoid committing the sin.

And when misfortune visits our home, when sorrow enters our hearts, and affliction presses heavily upon us, Oh! let us not be discouraged, but let us remember that God is Omnipotent; that He can aid us, comfort us, and restore to our hearts and our homes the peace and the happiness we had lost. May this salutary thought never depart from our hearts; so shall we be more patient, more resigned, and more submissive to the holy will of God; who tries us, it is true, but only with the view that when we shall have passed through this vale of tears, having borne our cross with patience in this life, we may at length arrive at that celestial home, where our Omnipotent God recompenses beyond all conception, the patience and the virtues of His saints.—AMEN.

## SERMON V.

## FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED—(CONTINUED.)

## GOD IS EVERYWHERE; GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS.

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“I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved.”—PSALMS, XV.

God is all-powerful. Let us, therefore, always fear offending the Lord, for the very moment we become guilty, he can punish us. The Holy Ghost has said it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God is omnipotent; why then should we be discouraged when calamities and misfortunes weigh heavily upon us? No, the Christian should never give way to despair, how heavy soever be the cross he has to carry, how excruciating soever be the pains he has to endure. Let us remember that our heavenly Father is omnipotent, that He watches over us, and His divine word is pledged that they who hope in Him, will not be confounded forever. Yes, we ought to have confidence in the all-powerful protection of our God, for it was not in mockery, it was not to deceive us, that He invited us all to come to Him, saying: “Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.”

The omnipotence of God, the salutary influence which the thought of this divine perfection should have on our conduct, such was the subject of our last instruction. Let us advance in the knowledge of the Lord, and to-day let us speak of His immensity, and of His infinite Omniscience.

“O Israel,” exclaims a prophet, “how vast is the habitation of God, how great are His possessions! He is great, He has no limits, He is sublime, He is immense.” To make us sensible of His immensity, the Lord God has himself told us, by the mouth of His prophets, that He is the Most High God, that He fills the heavens

and the earth, that the heavens and the earth can not contain Him ; that He is higher than the heavens and deeper than the abyss ; that the place of His habitation is vast and boundless. David, filled with the spirit of God, cries out in a transport of admiration : “ Whither shall I go from Thy spirit ? or whither shall I flee from Thy face ? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there ; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.”\*

But these expressions, however sublime they may be, are nevertheless mere human language, in which God condescends to address us, that He may not overwhelm our weakness ; for there is nothing in us nor around us which can exactly represent to us the immensity of God, such as it really is ; therefore, do not figure to yourselves, the Lord God as a great body, infinitely extended and covering the vast surface of the universe. No ; He existed before the world, which He himself has formed, and before He had created it, there was neither place nor space which could limit the infinite Being. God could have created other worlds a thousand times more vast than this ; and had He done so, He would still be everywhere present in them, as well as in our own. This world does not confine His infinite being ; God is not then inclosed within the limits of space ; but we and the entire world exist in God. We are in the immensity of God, like the fish in the water, or the bird in the air, as St. Augustine tells us, encircled as it were, by His divine Presence, for He fills the heavens and the earth. Go, then, where you will, traverse the open plain, or remain shut up in your house, perform your actions in the broad daylight, or bury yourselves in the thickest shades of darkness ; God is there ; He sees you ; nothing escapes his all-seeing eye, and He Himself says to you : “ What, then, are your thoughts ? Am I, think ye, a God at hand, and not a God afar off ? Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him.”† Ah ! says the apostle, “ there is no creature invisible to the eyes of God, before whom all things are laid open ; He sees all things, He knows all things, and His knowledge has no bounds.”

God knows not only the present, but the past and the future.

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\* Psalms, cxxxviii.

† Jeremias, xxiii : 23.

He knows not only what is outward, what appears to the eyes, but what passes even in the most secret and most intimate recesses of our hearts; He hears our words, He sees our actions, and reads in their inmost depths the secrets of our souls. He knows what are our thoughts, and what desires occupy our minds. Yes, says He, by the mouth of his prophet Ezechiel: "I know the thoughts of your hearts."\* He knows what you will do to-day; the future is present to Him, and nothing is hidden from Him. He penetrated our hearts, He foresaw what would be our ways, and He understood all our words a long time before they were uttered.

Reflect, now, my Brethren, on this; God is Everywhere, and He knows all things; to Him there is no secret, no mystery. He is Everywhere, He is, then, near us, He is in us; He knows, He hears, He sees every thing we do, every thing we say, every thing we think. How great, then, must be our audacity and rashness when we dare, under the very eyes of God, to harbor and foster so many sinful thoughts, to form so many criminal desires, to utter so many guilty words, and commit so many culpable actions! Would you dare do this sinful and shameful act in the presence of a man whom you respect? Would you dare, in his presence, give utterance to that blasphemous or obscene word? Where is the servant who would presume, under the very eyes of his master, to violate his orders and do what he had forbidden? Where is the man who would insult and outrage one, who, in an instant, could strike him dead?

And yet, my Brethren, we fear not to sully our souls with the guilt of the most shameful crimes in the very presence of God, who will not only exact from us a most rigid account of all our conduct, but who can even plunge us into eternal torments the very instant we become guilty in his sight? Is not this conduct, on our part, to say the least of it, unutterably rash and inconceivably wicked? In acting thus, do we not declare that we have no respect whatever for the divine Presence? It is not the same as if we said we no longer believe that God is Everywhere, that He sees all things, hears all things, and knows all things? In truth, my Brethren, were men thoroughly convinced that God is Everywhere, that they can not hide themselves from His sight, they never would be seen

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\* Ezechiel, xi: 5.



seeking solitude and darkness to give themselves up to vice, and burden their souls with the most criminal actions; they never would be seen waiting with such impatience for the night, to abandon themselves to the most shameful disorders. Unfortunate man! do you not know that the eyes of God are "more luminous than the sun?" You may withdraw yourself from the sight of man, but you can not escape the all-seeing eye of God; wheresoever you go that eye is fixed upon you,—everywhere your sovereign Judge sees your bad actions, hears your improper conversations, sees your perverse thoughts, your detestable projects; and the day will come when He will visit you with an awful retribution. In vain does the murderer, like Cain, seek to hide his crime; in vain does the unjust man, like Achab, seek excuses to palliate his injustice; in vain does the hypocrite, like the proud Pharisee, whilst deceiving men, wish to trifle with God; in vain does the luxurious man, like the wretched accusers of Susanna, cast down his eyes, that they may not behold the heavens. Remember, sinners, that there is a God who sees you, and a day will come when He will render to every one of you according to your works; when they who have surpassed all others in crime, will likewise surpass all others in punishment.

Oh! how terrifying to the sinner is the remembrance of the divine presence, but how consoling and encouraging to the good? Can there, indeed, be any thing better calculated to inspire us, my Brethren, with a noble courage and an admirable patience in all our cares and sorrows? Can there be any thing better fitted to fill us with heroic bravery in the contest we have to maintain against the enemies of our salvation? What more suited to strengthen us in our good resolutions, to impart to us perseverance in the exercise of virtue, and in the practice of good works, than this consoling thought, God is near me; He knows what I need, He understands my wants; my sorrows and my crosses are manifest to Him. He sees the good works I do to please Him, He witnesses the inward struggle I have to sustain against my passions and evil inclinations; the sighs I heave forth from the bottom of my heart, are not hidden from His sight. O! yes, He will come to my assistance, and He will reward me. If I suffer with Him, I will be glorified with Him in heaven, where there are no more dangers, nor sorrows, nor vexations, nor

disappointments, nor tears, because all these things shall have passed away, but where there are unutterable delights and never ending happiness. My Brethren, let us never forget the divine Presence after the example of the prophet, who had God always before his eyes. The Almighty has himself imposed this practice as a law upon us. "Walk before me," He says, "and be ye perfect." Yes, my Brethren, walk before the Lord; Here is the means of strengthening yourselves, and of advancing in the paths of virtue and of piety. Man ceased to keep God before his eyes, and all his ways became wicked, and filled with iniquity. Jerusalem fell into crime, because she had forgotten her God. Forgetfulness of the divine Presence is the sure road to eternal ruin, while the remembrance of it restrains man within the bounds of duty, and empowers him to bring forth fruits worthy of salvation, precious fruits, in recompense of which the Lord promises and grants peace of heart in this world, and boundless happiness in the world to come.—AMEN.

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## SERMON VI.

FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

### GOODNESS OF GOD.

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"Give praise to the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.—  
PSALMS, cxvii: 1.

THE Lord God is an infinite Spirit who fills heaven and earth, and whom heaven and earth can not contain. He is everywhere. *By His essence*, He is the infinite Being; by His presence, He is whole and entire in each place, as perfectly as He is in the entire universe; by His power, He acts everywhere. God sees all things,—God knows all things. He knows our thoughts, He sees our actions, He hears our words. The recollection of these divine perfections is well calculated to penetrate our hearts with the fear of the Lord,

and restrain us from vice and sin. For, how can we dare commit sin when we know that God is everywhere, and unceasingly crying out to the sinner that his most hidden crimes are seen? On the other hand, the remembrance of these divine perfections, is admirably suited to inspire us with a noble courage in the practice of virtue. For how powerfully must we not feel impelled to be faithful to the law of God, and how is it possible we could recede on the pathway of virtue, while calling to mind that we are under the eyes of our sovereign Master, who takes delight in encouraging His forgotten and despised servants, by assuring them that their virtues have a witness? But you will be still more firmly attached to the service of the Lord your God, when you become better acquainted with the most endearing of His perfections, His infinite Goodness, of which I intend to speak to you on this occasion.

“Praise the Lord, because He is good, for He is eternally good,” says the royal prophet. Wheresoever you cast your eyes, you will meet proofs of the infinite Goodness of God,—everywhere you may see and taste how good and sweet the Lord is.\* On every side the voice of all nature may be heard, exclaiming: “He is a God, author of all good; He is good and merciful; the Lord is sweet to all His creatures, and His mercy and His Goodness are spread over all His works.”† It was the boundless Goodness of our God, which from nothing created the world and the innumerable creatures that inhabit it. It is this boundless Goodness of God which fills Him with the sincere desire of making happy all His creatures, from the highest angel of heaven, to the meanest insect that crawls along the earth. “All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season: What Thou givest them, they shall gather up; when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall be filled with good.”‡

But to us, especially, does it belong to praise with all our heart the Lord our God, and to glorify eternally His adorable name:§ for it is on us that the Lord has made flow the torrent of His graces, of His goodness, and of His love. My Christian Friends, can you count the graces, the favors, and the benefits which God bestows upon you every day and every hour of the day? Oh! every moment of our lives is an evidence of the Goodness of God toward us! It is God

\* Psalms, xxxiii: 9. † Psalms, cxliv. ‡ Psalms, ciii: 27, 28. § Psalms, lxxxv.





who is the principle and the source of all that we are and of all that we possess. To whom are you indebted for your existence, if not to the infinite bounty of God, who gave you being, in preference to so many others whom He might have created? To whom do you owe your soul, with its faculty of reason, by which you are elevated above all other creatures, if not to the infinite Goodness of God? Truly, God could have left you in the abyss of nothingness and not have created you. You did nothing and could not have done any thing to deserve the privilege of creation; but the bounty of God has called you, has created you, and raised you up to the highest point of glory. He has made you the most excellent, the most noble, the most exalted of His creatures in this visible world. He has given you a body erect, and of wonderful structure; He has formed your soul after the most perfect of all models; "let us make man to our own image and likeness," said the Lord,—and you were accordingly made to the image and likeness of God; and He gave you an immortal soul, a sublime reason, and a will free and powerful. Yes! the hand of God is open, and you have been loaded with the favors and the treasures of His bounty!

But did the bounty of God cease when He had bestowed upon you this creation, so exalted, so privileged? No; the hand that formed you still continues to lead, feed, and support you; it disposes all things with a view to provide for your wants in this world. The sun, the moon, the millions of stars that shine in the heavens, all animate and inanimate beings which fill the earth, the air, the water, for what purpose have they been created? For you, for your use, to serve and please you! For you the grain grows in the fields; for you the grape ripens on the hill-side; for you the trees bend down with fruits; for you the flowers exhale their sweet fragrance; for you the whole earth is covered with overflowing riches. To provide you with raiment, to assist you in your labors or contribute to your support, God speaks, and the earth is inhabited with wild and domestic animals. It is the bounty of God which commands the strong horse to obey the voice even of a child. It is God who holds the proud, threatening head of the ox submissive to the yoke and the plough.

But, my Brethren, does the Lord bestow these benefits, these graces and favors only on the wise, the virtuous, and the pious?



No; our heavenly Father permits even the most wicked of men to drink at the inexhaustible source of His bounty; even such as trample under foot the precepts of so good a God, and make it a point every moment of their lives to offend Him. It is because this Goodness becomes mercy and wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. Therefore does it lavish on the good and the bad alike the blessings of health and strength. Yes, it is the divine Goodness assuming the visible character of mercy, that causes the sun to shed his light and fructifying heat alike on the just and the unjust. It is this merciful Goodness that spreads over the fields of the pious Christian the fertilizing dews of heaven, and at the same time does not suffer the lands of the impious and wicked to be deprived of them. "Let us, then, praise and glorify the Lord, because He is good. Let us praise the Lord, for He is good!" Such is the lively sense of gratitude with which you should be penetrated when you call to mind the immense blessings God has heaped upon you. Yet, my Brethren, all I have hitherto said gives but a faint idea of the Goodness of God in our regard. Would you know where the bounty of God appears in its full extent? O you have received the true faith, my Brethren,—and I think I hear you answer me in the words of the Apostle: "We have seen the Goodness of God our Saviour, and His love for men; He has saved us by His mercy, by the baptism of regeneration; in order, that having been justified by his grace, we may hope for the inheritance of eternal life."

The Son of God loved us with a superabounding love; He came down from heaven and died for us! Where is the king, who, to rescue from a justly merited death, a criminal, would order his own son—his only son—to clothe himself with the garments of a malefactor, and deliver himself up to the executioner, to suffer at his hands the most ignominious death? Has the world ever furnished such an example? No earthly father ever exhibited such generosity; no: but God loves us, His Goodness is infinite; and so much has He loved us that He delivered up for us His Son, His only Son in whom He was well pleased. He invested him with the garments of a sinner by clothing him with our nature; He willed that He should become the Man of Sorrows, the reproach of the people, and that He should die on an ignominious cross. "Having loved His

own, He loved them even to the end." The Son of God died for us! O! goodness of God! O! mercy of the Lord! Yes, I will praise Thee, O Lord, for all time to come, with my whole heart; "because Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling, that I may please in the sight of the living."\* O! bounty of God, can I ever be wanting in confidence in Thee? Surely then, the confidence we place in the Goodness and mercy of God is just, because well grounded; but is it not true, my Brethren, that the remembrance of the love which God bears you, the recollection of His precious favors and His infinite bounties, should have the effect, not merely of exciting your confidence and admiration, but also of lighting up in your hearts a burning love, a sincere attachment for so tender a Father, for a God so good, who has loved you so much? No, you will no longer offend this God of Goodness, you will no longer disobey this best of Masters, this kindest of Fathers; and the resolution of walking henceforth in the way of His commandments, will be indelibly imprinted upon your hearts. The Lord would not then say to you: "I have raised up children; I have fed them and they have despised me."† No, you will sin no more, and you will bear constantly in mind that "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that renouncing impiety and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world."‡ You will remember the abounding Goodness of our God, and you will contribute to His glory, walking in the practice of every good work, and thereby worthily preparing yourselves to be admitted into that delightful paradise to which He invites us all, and which He has opened unto us by His sufferings and death on the cross.—AMEN.

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\* Psalms, lv : 13.

† Isaias, i.

‡ Titus, ii : 11, 12.

## SERMON VII.

## PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

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“Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.”—  
ECCLESIASTICUS, ii: 11.

It is the creative hand of God which drew from nothing the world and all that it contains, and it is His Providence which watches over and preserves all things. If the sun faithfully runs its course in the heavens, it is God who, as it were, leads it along. If that beneficent planet sheds light and fertility on the earth, it is because God so ordains it. If the earth supplies our wants and rewards the labor of man by yielding him his daily bread, it only obeys the commands of the Lord. If the air descends into our breasts and keeps us alive, it but follows the path marked out for it by Providence. Yes, my Brethren, the eye of Providence is always upon the works of creation, and from the crawling worm to the highest star, every thing is an object of the tenderest solicitude of the Lord. Oh! “know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.” Yes, we ought to have confidence in the paternal Providence of God, for He is all-powerful, He is infinitely wise, and His bounty knows no limits. You know it is of this Providence that I wish to speak to you to-day. It is a most interesting subject: listen then with attention. In vain would all the beings in heaven, on earth and in hell unite their efforts to oppose the exercise of God’s power; the will of the Lord must ever be accomplished. The reward will always be given and the punishment inflicted just as it pleases God. This is a truth supported by numerous examples drawn from the Sacred Scriptures or furnished by the experience of all ages. Joseph, while yet a youth, had attained the highest degree of perfection in the practice of virtue,



and the most ardent piety adorned his beautiful soul. In the designs of God it was in consequence determined that he should be raised to honors and to wealth. Beloved by his father Jacob, he was for that very reason an object of aversion to his brothers, whose hatred increased when they learned that Joseph had resolved to reveal to their father, a heinous crime of which these wicked youths were guilty. But their hatred was changed into fury when Joseph in his simplicity, made known to them the two dreams which the Lord had sent him, and which foretold that this holy son of Jacob would be invested with great authority over his brothers. In their unnatural rage they determined to take away his life, but God willed that Ruben, the eldest of the patriarch's children, should oppose their horrid design. His Providence brought along some Egyptian merchants, and to them Joseph was sold by his brethren. After that he became a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the king's guards, who at first recognizing the profound wisdom of this holy young man, treated him well, but being deceived by calumny, had him before long cast into a prison. Here he lay for some years, until the Providence of God in a wonderful manner, made him known to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. His wisdom, and the foresight which the Almighty had given to him, enabled him to render most signal services to the king and all the people of Egypt, and Pharaoh, in gratitude for these services, elevated him to the dignity of governor of his empire, and made him the greatest man in the kingdom next himself. Thus it was that God at length rewarded the virtues of his servant Joseph.

From this same land of Egypt, the cry of the Israelites arose to the Lord to deliver them from the cruel slavery under which they had groaned for so many years. God commands Moses and his brother Aaron to go and inform Pharaoh that he must permit the children of Israel to leave the land of Egypt. Pharaoh hardens his heart, resists the command of God, and the hand of the Lord chastises him and his people with ten frightful plagues. The cruel king is forced to acknowledge the finger of the Almighty in the wonders which were wrought before his eyes; he bows to the mandates of heaven, and allows the people of God to depart. But he soon grows sorry and changes his mind. Then, at the head of a powerful army, he follows on the tracks of the Israelites: he sees



them, hastens his march, and resolves to massacre them on the shores of the Red Sea. But what can man do in opposition to the designs of God? God commands; Moses strikes the waters, and they rise like high walls on each side to give a passage to the poor fugitives. The king of Egypt presses on their steps in this road hollowed out in the middle of the sea; once more Moses strikes the waters, the sea returns to its bed and buries in its waves the entire Egyptian army. Thus it is God punishes the wicked.

God is all-powerful; what he wills is accomplished in despite of all the evil designs and criminal projects of men. "There is one most high Creator, Almighty, and a powerful King and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon His throne, and He is the God of dominion."\* Children of an all-powerful God, have confidence in your heavenly Father, and let yourselves be conducted by His holy and adorable Providence, which rules and disposes all things according to the councils of the most profound wisdom. God knows all things, sees all things, ordains all things; nothing happens, nothing is done, but what the Lord wills or permits. "And all their works are as the sun in the sight of God; and His eyes are continually upon their ways."† It is by dispensation of His will or permission of His wisdom, that good things or evil, health and sickness, success and misfortune, prosperity and misery come upon us. Every thing in the world moves along in the paths marked out by Providence; it is the Lord who directs the steps of man, whether he be a scourge of God, who lays waste the land, or an peaceful ploughman who makes it fertile by his labor. Even the most minute events are balanced in the hand of Providence, for the Lord hath said, "not a sparrow shall fall to the ground without the will of your heavenly Father. The very hairs of your head are numbered."‡ Let your hearts, therefore, repose with the utmost confidence on the infinitely wise Providence of your God. Receive with gratitude the blessings He bestows upon you, but also accept with resignation, and bear with patience, the crosses He sends you; murmur not against God, and arraign not His Providence. Ah! my Brethren, how can we be so daring as to summon the Providence of God to the tribunal of our weak reason? Who are we

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\* Ecclesiasticus, i: 8. † Ecclesiasticus, xvii: 16. ‡ St. Matthew, x: 29, 30.

that we would enter into dispute with the Lord? And nevertheless we have the audacity to do so, when we criticise the conduct of God; as for example, in the distribution of worldly goods. Why, we ask, are there some rich, and some poor? Tell me, my Brethren, if all were rich, who would be willing to labor? Who would wish to be laborer, mechanic, or servant? If all were masters, who would obey? Who would prevent crime and resist injustice? If all were poor, who would assist the unfortunate! The world would be like a vast hospital overcrowded with suffering beings without aid and without resources. Take the world then as it is, and acknowledge and adore the supreme wisdom of your Creator, for it is ever accompanied by His infinite bounty. This pious, upright man, prospers in his enterprises, lives to a good old age, and enjoys happiness; why? because he is worthy of this happiness. His virtues deserved it, and he knows how to make a holy use of the goods which God gives him. On the other hand, I see another righteous Christian who is poor, unfortunate, pressed down with disease and with sorrows; why? O because God desires that the heart of this Christian should not be attached to this world, but that he should aspire to the possession of celestial and eternal goods. Like the poor man Lazarus, he is in suffering, but if like Lazarus, he walks along the road of sorrows, like him also will he arrive at the heaven of joy. Death comes and takes away that fervent young Christian, as it took away in the flower of their youth Abel and Aloysius of Gonzaga; why? because God hastens to call him to heaven, there to reward his holy life; or perhaps God, who loves him, took him from this world, foreseeing that a longer life would have caused his ruin and perdition.

God strikes the impious and wicked with death in the midst of their career: why? because they are unworthy of life, and He is unwilling that their bad example should be any longer a temptation to the just. But other wicked men live a long time on earth: there is no one, no matter how depraved he may be, who has not sometimes performed some good deeds. God grants him a long life, thus to reward on earth the few good works he may have performed, and also to give him time to be converted and to be saved. It often happens, that the Lord strikes a terrible blow, prostrates the wicked, and plunges him into misery, sickness and misfortune;

thus to compel him to open his eyes to the true light, to acknowledge his crimes, to be converted, and to save his soul.

Yes, my Brethren, the wisdom of God is displayed in all He does, ordains or permits. Therefore, it does not belong to our weak reason to penetrate the inscrutable designs of the Lord our God. Let us often say with the Apostle: "Oh! how incomprehensible are the judgments of God! how unsearchable are His ways!" How good God is, and how He loves to take care of us, who are the work of His hands!

God is good; He compares himself to a most tender father, saying: "As the father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him."\* God is good, loving us with more than a mother's love and tenderness, for he says to us: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands."† You see then that the Lord watches over you with more care, loves you with more affection, than the most tender mother loves her beloved child. Have confidence then in the Providence of God. How the millions of poor, who like the birds of the air sow not neither do they reap, and yet find their daily bread, proclaim the watchfulness of God's bounty, and the maternal solicitude of His divine Providence. How the poor little orphans, who deprived of father and mother, yet find at the hands of God, nourishment and raiment, exalt His divine goodness. God has seen their tears, He has heard their sighs. Surely He who hears so plainly and answers so benignantly the plaintive cry of the little famishing bird, cannot be deaf to the voice, or heedless of the misery of the creatures whom He has stamped with His own image and likeness? After the example of all the true servants of God, let us, my Brethren, repose with confidence on the Providence of God. He is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise and good, and His care will never abandon us. But let us also endeavor to fulfill well His precepts and commandments; let us discharge with diligence and cheerfulness the duties of the state of life in which the hand of God has placed us; let us abound in good works, and thereby contribute to the glory of God; this is

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\* Psalms, cii: 13.

† Isaias, xlix: 15.



our vocation in this world. But it is from God that the desire and the strength to accomplish it must come. Let us, therefore, pray with fervor and with perseverance; let us ask, and it will be given us; God will be with us, and every day we will feel the truth of these words of the royal prophet: "hope in the Lord and do good, and all things will turn to your advantage."—AMEN.

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## SERMON VIII.

FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED—(CONTINUED.)

### THE WORLD AND THE ANGELS.

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"All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord : O ye Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord."—DANIEL, iii : 57.

WE have had the happiness of meditating on the Lord, our God, and we know what are His adorable perfections. We will adore Him and love Him, for He is the supreme majesty, whose power is without limits, whose knowledge is infinite, whose goodness is unbounded. We will have confidence in the providence of our God, for whatever it does, and whatever it ordains is good, holy and adorable. We know now that the blessings which heaven bestows upon us, and the evils wherewith we are afflicted, all proceed from the love of God for us, the love of a father for his children; our last instruction convinced us of this. Let us then continue the explanation of the first article of our Creed, and let us speak to-day of the creation of the World and of the Angels. To create is to make out of nothing, to call into existence, to give being to that which was not, to cause a being to exist from nothing and by a single act of the will. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;" that is to say: I believe, I confess, I acknowledge that in the beginning, whilst there was nothing, and when there was neither heaven nor earth, God, who is from all eter-



nity, called from nothing every thing which exists, both heaven and earth, and every thing which they contain. To create all things, He required neither matter nor instruments; He is himself the sole principle of all things, even of matter from which He made all things else. The general of an army says: let the army march, and forthwith the army marches; let it make such an evolution, and the evolution is made. A whole army is put in motion at the command of one man, by the simple motion of his lips: Feeble image of the power of God! The Almighty has no lips to move; His word is not like that of man, it is not a mere vibration of air which strikes the ear; the word of God is His will. He spoke, that is to say, He willed. He has only to will in himself, and every thing which He wills, must be fulfilled as he willed it, and at the time which He marked out. "Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing."\* He made all things in six days. It was not through disability or weakness that God distributed the works of creation into six different days, neither was it through fatigue that He rested when He had completed it. But He wished, by dividing them, to make us more attentive to His wonders, and in some manner to adapt them to our capacity, by showing them to us in parts; He wished, moreover, to teach us that we ought to labor during six days of the week, but that the seventh should be spent in holy rest.

Every thing which God created, was good and even perfect. "He saw all the things which He had made," says the inspired writer, "and they were very good." Nevertheless, there were some of His creatures that far surpassed the others in excellence and perfection. These privileged creatures were Angels and men.

We are unable to say precisely on what day or in what instant of the creation of the World, it pleased God to create the Angels; the Holy Scriptures do not mention it. No doubt, it was in the beginning; for the Lord says in the book of Job: "When the morning stars praised me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody."† They were certainly created before man received existence, since Eve was deceived by the devil, the chief of the fallen Angels, who took the form of a serpent in order to seduce her.

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\* 2 Machabees, vii: 28.

† Job, xxxviii: 7.

The Angels are pure spirits, endowed with a high degree of intelligence, and having neither body nor figure. They are not such as they are represented to us. We see them painted young, because spirits or pure intelligences, never grow old; and with wings, to show the speed and quickness wherewith they execute the orders of God, for "they are all spirits appointed to be the ministers of the will of the Lord."\* They were created in the state of grace and sanctity, enjoyed the friendship of God, were embellished with all the gifts of grace necessary and sufficient for their perseverance in good, and were appointed to merit by their perseverance the happiness of never falling. But the Angels were free, and like us, they had to merit by their fidelity, the happiness of being confirmed in grace. All were not faithful; there were some among them who abused their liberty; who had the audacity to rise in rebellion against God, and revolt against their sovereign Master. But they lost for ever the ineffable happiness of seeing and of praising, of adoring and of loving God in heaven. God did not pardon these rebellious and prevaricating Angels; "but having cast them down into the place of torments, delivered them into the chains of hell to be tormented, to be reserved unto judgment."† Thus it was, that God confounded the pride of these rebel spirits, who in the person of Lucifer, their chief, had the audacity to say: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars, and I will be like the Most High."‡ See how they were hurled into the bottom of the abyss, which had been prepared for them, or scattered in the air, but bearing always within themselves the hell which burns them.

It is the doctrine of all authors, the Apostolic doctrine, as St. Jerome and St. Augustine tell us, that the air, which is between heaven and earth, is full of bad Angels. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood," says St. Paul; "but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in high places."§ The demons hate us, for jealousy gnaws their proud hearts, as they know that an exceedingly great promise was made to us, and that we have it in our power, to attain those thrones in heaven which they have lost. Hence they spare no pains, but labor continually to drag us into

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\* Hebrews, i.    † 2 Peter, ii: 4.    ‡ Isaias, xiv: 13.    § Ephesians, vi: 12.

sin, that they may thereby wrest us from God. Wherefore, says the Holy Ghost, "be sober; and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour."\*

No doubt, the devil is full of craft and malice; still, he can only entice and tempt, but he can not offer you violence. "He is like a chained dog," says St. Augustine; "he can bark, but he can not bite any, except those who go near him, and rashly expose themselves to his teeth." The fault then always rests with ourselves, if we fall into sin; for it is always possible for us, with the aid and the grace of God, to resist the most violent temptations. Great is the hatred of the devil, furious the envy which gnaws his heart; far beyond that of men is his power; and yet he can not hurt your souls, if you preserve in your heart a firm resolution of living well, if you place your confidence in God, if you pray, and follow the counsel of the good Angels who remained faithful to the Lord.

But while on one side, the spirits of the abyss and the powers of darkness struggle with all their might to injure us, and make us unfaithful to the holy law of God, that we may one day suffer and blaspheme with them in hell; on the other, the Angels of heaven are always ready to help us with their powerful assistance, to protect us, and defend us against the suggestions and temptations of our enemies. In fact, it is not only that they might honor, praise and adore Him in heaven, that the Almighty created the Angels; but also that they might minister to those who were to possess the inheritance of salvation, "and He hath given His Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways."\* Yes, these holy Angels, faithful to the divine command, constantly walk at our right hand and discover to us the snares which the devil lays for us. They are unceasingly occupied inspiring us with a holy fear of God, and with a lively and constant love of virtue. O! who can tell the charity of these happy spirits! their sympathy for our misfortunes, their attention to our wants! their patience in supporting our weakness! Certain of their own salvation, they have no uneasiness but for us. It is, therefore, that they manifest such great joy in heaven when a sinner is converted, and does penance; hence they pray for us with such

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\* 1 Peter, v: 8

† Psalms, xc: 11.



great fervor. Hence comes that attention which they still have in presenting before the throne of the Lord, our supplications and our vows.

We will never depart from the way of wisdom and of duty, my Brethren, but will ever advance toward perfection and happiness, if we keep closely united to these holy Angels, listen attentively to their good counsels, follow their salutary inspirations, and correspond to the care they take to conduct us to heaven. Let us do this, let us always do this, my Brethren, and thus guided, we are sure to pass safe and sound, through the dangerous desert of this life, and we shall infallibly reach the sublime goal, which the Lord hath marked out for us; we shall reach heaven, for which the paternal hand of God formed us.—AMEN.

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## SERMON IX.

FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

### CREATION AND SIN OF THE FIRST MAN.

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“Let us make man to our image and likeness.”—GENESIS, i: 26.

OF all creatures that are in heaven or on earth, the angels and men are the most noble, because being endowed with the gift of reason, they bear a greater likeness to God. The angels were created in sanctity and justice, but all did not remain faithful to the Lord. Many of them were ruined through pride, and were driven by the justice of God from heaven. These rebellious spirits, jealous of the happiness to which the bounty of the Lord calls us, endeavor by every possible means to deprive us of this happiness by rendering us unworthy of it. But, if the bad angels seek our ruin, on the other hand, the good angels protect us, discover to us the snares of our enemy, and teach us how to avoid them. Such was the important matter which I unfolded to you in our last instruction



To-day I will recall to your recollection what religion teaches on the subject of the Creation and the sad fall of the first man.

On the sixth day of Creation, every thing in nature was ready ; but the world was like a state without a king, like a temple without a priest, and all creatures, insensible and inanimate themselves, demanded an interpreter, who could give glory for them to the Lord. Then it was that God said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness." He took a little of the slime of the earth, a little clay, and from it formed the body of man ; He breathed upon this body, that is to say, He created a soul which He placed in this body, and to His work He gave the name of Adam, which signifies man of earth, or red earth.

If Adam had to remain the only one of his kind, or if he were to have for his companions only the irrational animals, there would have been no one with whom he could converse on the advantages of his happy state, and the blessings of his bountiful Creator. God therefore said: "It is not good that man be alone ; let us make for him a companion like to himself." And at the same instant Adam fell into a profound sleep ; the Lord took from his side a rib, with which He formed the body of woman ; infused into her, as into Adam, a spiritual and immortal soul, and gave to this woman the name of Eve, which signifies mother of the living. Such is the history of the Creation of our first parents, as the Holy Spirit has preserved it for us in the books of Moses.

You see, my Brethren, man is a being composed of two parts, which are essentially different. He is composed of a body formed from the slime of the earth, and of a spiritual, rational, immortal soul, which is most certainly, the noblest portion of our being ; or rather our being is essentially the soul, and our body is but the clothing. It is by our soul and by it alone, that we take our place in the ranks of intelligent and rational beings. It is by our soul and by it alone, that we are made the images of God. It is by our soul and by it alone, that we are elevated even to the knowledge of our God, adore, love and serve Him. It is by our soul and by it alone, that we are enabled to see God in heaven, to contemplate Him, and, in this ineffable contemplation, to taste the supreme happiness. And what is our body ? A little slimy earth. It, therefore, is nothing ; in the soul behold our real treasure, behold our true

glory. It was not drawn from matter, the earth was not the place of its origin; it came from God, pure, spiritual and immortal. Alas! How little do we comprehend our dignity! We carry in our breasts a soul on which God has engraved His own likeness, an immortal soul, and we carry it as heedless of the fact as the mountain is insensible to the treasure concealed beneath its surface. St. Bernard reproaches our folly, when he said, that it seems there is nothing more vile to our eyes than our soul. We see only our body, we love only our body, we do nothing good except for the body; but our body comes from the earth, and it will return to the earth, while our soul comes from God, and it ought to return to God. Take care then that you do not dishonor, and that you do not lose this heaven-born soul; take care that you do not descend even to the ranks of the brutes by making yourselves slaves of vile and shameful passions. O! such is not the destiny of man, no,—man is made for heaven.

Man, so signally favored above all visible creatures, was placed in a garden of delights. It was his duty to love his God; to serve Him by his love; to bless that beneficent hand which heaped upon him so many favors, and to look for eternal glory as the recompense of his fidelity. Had he remained faithful, death would not have come to separate his soul from his body; but, without undergoing the agony of death, after a certain time spent on earth, he would have been borne by the hand of God into heaven, there to enjoy eternal happiness. Such was the noble destiny of man, and to attain it, every means was given him. In fact, he went forth perfect from the hands of God: "God made man right;"\* "He was created not to die," says St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.† No darkness obscured his mind; no dangerous ignorance, no defect of judgment and reason tarnished the beauty of his soul. He possessed all the natural and supernatural lights of which he was capable, and which were suitable to him. He was free, but his will was upright and inclined to good, with no leaning toward evil. In the heart of our first father, there was none of that concupiscence which disorders our inclinations, there were none of those passions which disturb the serenity of our souls and the peace

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\* Ecclesiastes, vii.

† Romans, v.

of our hearts. In Adam, the flesh was subject to the spirit, and the spirit might have been easily made subject to God. For so many great favors what did the Creator require from man? That man should abstain from eating the fruit of a certain tree, which was pointed out to him, a token of his gratitude that he should have given with as much joy as fidelity. But behold, the devil enters into the serpent, presents the fatal fruit to Eve, addresses her with flattering words, and inspires her with a deadly pride. Eve eats of this fruit, Adam eats of it, and both are plunged into the lowest depths of misery. Awful will be the punishment, for great has been the crime which they have committed.

The sin of Adam was a sin which included in itself a vast number of others; it was a sin of pride and of the most insolent pride, by which man, not content with the degree of honor to which God had elevated him, wished even to make himself equal to God; it was a sin of revolt, by which the creature sought to usurp that independence which belongs only to God; it was a sin of criminal curiosity, of base sensuality, of black ingratitude toward a sovereign benefactor; it was an impious disobedience, by which man, despising the express prohibition of the Creator, refused to acknowledge him as his master; it was a crime which embraced in itself every crime, since it reduced the human race to the slavery of ignorance and concupisence, from which all crimes proceed; a crime by which the first man entailed death on all his posterity to the end of ages. Adam was the murderer of himself and of all his descendants, whom he deprived of the life of innocence, on the instant of their conception in their mother's womb. The sin of Adam was a sin unutterable in its enormity, an incomprehensible misfortune! says St. Augustine. And this sin is also ours, it carries ruin to our souls, it sullies all the descendants of these first sinners: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."\* "And we were by nature children of wrath."†

Adam sinned, he committed a great crime, and punishment fell upon the guilty. The change which was wrought in Adam and in all nature, was frightful; the flesh rebelled against the spirit, disorder

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\* Romans v: 12.

† Ephesians ii: 3.



settled in the heart and in the body of man, thick darkness obscured his soul, his will became unruly, his passions usurped the place of reason and justice, and his propensities became corrupt, and inclining him to evil. He is driven from the earthly paradise by the angel of the Lord; he must suffer, groan, and eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. He lost the life of the soul, when he lost justice, and when he separated himself from God: he may be justly regarded as dead, since for him death is inevitable, and the infirmities and calamities to which he is henceforth subject, are the preparation and forerunner of his painful death. Man committed a crime which should have caused his irreparable ruin, but Thou, O my God, hast cast upon him a look of mercy. Oh! how immense is the mercy which the Lord has displayed toward prevaricating man! Learn, O my Brethren, how grateful you ought to be to the paternal bounty of your God. The angels, it is true, sinned in heaven, but this sin defiled only those angels who were guilty, it matters not, for them there is no hope of pardon, and the justice of God, swifter than the lightning's flash, overtakes them, and precipitates them from heaven into the eternal torments of hell. Man also became guilty; did God reject him forever? O boundless mercy! God gave man time to enter into himself, to acknowledge his fault, to weep over his crime, to do penance, and to recover the heaven which he had lost. O divine bounty! man commits a crime unutterable in its malice, an incomprehensible crime, and on the very instant God comes to him, seeks him, calls him, and promises to him a Saviour who would die for man's sins. This Saviour will be the only Son of that great offended God,—Jesus Christ,—who, eighteen hundred and fifty-nine years ago, descended from the highest heavens into the virginal womb of Mary, clothed himself with our nature, and became man without ceasing to be God; who took upon himself all our iniquities, and died on the cross to redeem us from hell. It is this divine Jesus who opened heaven for us, and who invites us to follow him in the pathway of virtue, which leads to supreme happiness.—AMEN.



## SERMON X.

## SECOND AND THIRD ARTICLES OF THE CREED.

## THE INCARNATION.

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“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

MAN, created to the image of God in sanctity and justice, placed in the terrestrial paradise, and loaded with graces and with favors, had the audacity to transgress the law of his Creator; defiled with the stain of sin, he became unfortunate himself, and made all his posterity sharers in his misfortune. Such is the teaching of faith. But it would avail us little to know the origin and cause of our evils, if we did not also know their remedy. Now this so necessary remedy, religion teaches us, is to be found in the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, that is to say, in the mystery of the Son of God made man, a mystery which we profess to believe every time we recite the Creed, wherein we say; “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” It is this adorable mystery which will make the subject of our present instruction. Listen then to me, I pray you, with attention.

That we may conceive a just idea of the great mystery of the Incarnation, let us first give ear to the Apostle St. John. “In the beginning,” he says, “was the Word,” that is to say, the Son of God, “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”\*

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\* St. John, i.

Behold, my Brethren, the most sublime and most touching expression possible of the mystery of the Incarnation. We see here the eternal Word, the only Son of God, the second person of the most Holy Trinity, in all the majesty, which becomes Him as God ; but this eternal Word, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made ; this great God who filled the whole world with His presence, and whom the world knew not, to what was He not reduced that He might come to dwell among us, and thus make himself known to the world ? “He was made flesh,” that is to say, He is united to the flesh in such a manner, that He was made but one with the flesh. “He is made flesh ;” but the Son of God took also a soul like ours ; why then does the Apostle speak here only of the flesh, only of that body composed of flesh and bones, which had its origin from the slime of earth ? Ah ! my Brethren, it was that we might see more clearly the wonderful humiliation to which the Son of God reduced himself through love of us. Should a prince descend from his throne and put on the dress of the meanest of his subjects, that he might enter the dungeon of a poor prisoner and bear him words of consolation ; would he on that account cease to be prince ? Would he in his rags, lose any of his dignity and power ? assuredly not. Thus it was, my Brethren, that the Son of God clothed himself in our flesh and assumed the form of the slave, yet without losing any of His divinity, but continuing to be after His Incarnation all that He had been before it. Nevertheless, since we are only dust and ashes, it is always true to say with the Apostle St. Paul, that in becoming like unto us, the Son of God humbled himself even to annihilation.

“The Word was made flesh,” the Son of God became perfectly like unto us poor and miserable creatures ; in truth, sin and concupiscence alone excepted, Jesus, the Son of the Eternal God, was as we are. Like us, He had a body subject to hunger, to thirst, to fatigue, to sleep, to pain and to death. Like us, He had a soul sensible of joy, sadness, fear, hope and pity. St. Paul admirably expresses this when he says that our divine Saviour “was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin.”\*

The Word of God was made flesh, and the body which He

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\* Hebrews, iv : 15.

assumed, He took in the chaste womb of the most holy Virgin Mary, who was of the royal family of David. In her chaste womb He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in a manner, altogether miraculous and divine. The same God who created heaven and earth, who formed from dust the body of the first man, and his soul from nothing, this great God, from the most pure blood of Mary, formed a body like ours, for which He created and to which He united a human soul, but a soul all pure and holy. At the very instant when God formed this body and this soul, the eternal Word, the second person of the most adorable Trinity, descending from heaven, without quitting the bosom of His Father, and becoming what until then He was not, without ceasing to be what from all eternity He was, came to unite himself to this body and to this soul, by a tie which even death could not sever. The Son of God became the Son of man!

Although the three divine persons coöperated in this sacred mystery to produce this body and this soul, and the union of the eternal Word with this body and this soul, yet the Apostles and the Church attribute this miraculous operation to the Holy Ghost. Ah! my Brethren, the reason for it is affecting. It is because the Holy Ghost being the essential love of the Father and the Son, the work of the Incarnation of the Word should be attributed to Him, inasmuch as it is the most manifest and most sensible proof of God's love for us: "God," says the Holy Ghost himself, "so loved the world, that He delivered up His only Son, in order that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Guided by faith, let us penetrate as far as possible into the mystery of the Son of God, made man. Jesus Christ is at the same time perfect God and perfect man. He is God like His Father, and in all things equal to Him; He is man like us, and in all things like us, except in sin. As God, says St. Augustine, He has a Father who begot Him from all eternity, and He has no mother; as man, He was created in time, and has no father, for Joseph, the spouse of Mary, was only the guardian of his infancy. As God, Jesus Christ is eternal, and was before Abraham had been created. As man, He was the descendant of Abraham. As God, He changed water into wine, He healed with a word, the most incurable diseases, restored the dead to life, and commanded all nature. As man, He



was born in Bethlehem, fled into Egypt, drank, ate, rested, slept, was troubled, afflicted, suffered and died. Had then our divine Saviour, in His one person, two distinct natures, a divine and a human one? Yes, and each of these natures had a will and power of action proper to itself.

But these two natures are united one with the other in such a manner, that they cannot be separated. They will and act together, and their wills and actions are always in perfect harmony. We can not separate these two natures, yet, one is perfectly distinct from the other, the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ and His divinity make but one and the same person; the soul, the body and the divine Word, make but one Jesus Christ, but one Man-God, but one God, made man, who was both God and man at the same time.

What follows from this mysterious union? That Jesus Christ, being both God and man, every thing that He has said, done and suffered, belongs equally to one and to the other; that the birth of Jesus Christ, perfect man, His tears, His sufferings, His blood and His death are no less than His most divine works, the birth, the tears, the sufferings, the blood and the death of a God. Why? Because it was not a part of Jesus Christ that did or suffered all these things, but it was Jesus Christ whole and entire, Jesus Christ, both God and man, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and God like to the Father. What further follows from this mysterious union? That the most holy Virgin is truly, really, properly, and in all the force of the term, the mother of God. It is true, she had no part in the eternal generation of Jesus Christ as God; but Jesus both God and man was not less wholly and completely her son; just as we are wholly and completely, soul and body, the children of our mothers, although they had no part in the creation of our souls. Mary indeed is really the mother of God; to her alone belongs the honor of having, in common with God the Father, a son who is at the same time both her son and the Son of God. This Son of God made man, this divine Son of Mary is called Jesus Christ. This is the name given Him by God before He was conceived in the womb of His mother, and to our divine Lord alone does it belong to bear this sacred name, for this name signifies Saviour, and Jesus was the only one who saved us, who delivered us from our sins and from the pains of hell which we had merited;



the salvation too which He brought on earth, is the eternal salvation, the salvation which a God alone can give. Name of Jesus! adorable name of my divine Saviour! thou art above every name! at the name of Jesus then, let every knee bow in heaven, on earth, and in hell.

The name of Christ, which we join to that of Jesus, is no less divine, for our Lord has said "flesh and blood have not revealed it, but my Father who is in heaven." *Christ* signifies anointed or consecrated; this is the reason our divine Saviour is called the Christ. He is in himself and by himself the Christ, for in Him the plenitude of the divinity dwells. It is this unction of the divinity that made Him at the same time priest, king and prophet. As priest, He offered himself for us on the cross, and still offers himself daily on our altars. As king, and King of kings, and Lord of lords, "all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth." As prophet, He is the source of light; for He contains within himself all the treasures of the wisdom and of the science of the prophets, and it was not by measure, "but in all its plenitude, that God gave His Spirit to Him."

Such, my Brethren, was He whom God raised up in the midst of His people to conduct them to salvation and happiness, who blotted out the sentence of condemnation pronounced against us, who reconciled earth with heaven, and broke down the thick wall which separated us from God. Glory, honor and thanksgiving to our good Saviour! Ah! let us never cease to praise and bless Him! and let us never forget that this good Jesus came on earth to induce us to follow Him in the path of virtue, in the love of God, and the love of our neighbor. Let us follow this divine Saviour, for He is the way, the truth, and the life; let us hear Him, He alone has the words of eternal life; let us perform well what He has commanded, follow the example He has given, practice the heavenly doctrine He has taught; and then truly will He be to us a Saviour, opening for us the gates of heaven, and conducting us into the bosom of God.—AMEN.

## SERMON XI.

SECOND AND THIRD ARTICLES OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

## CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

THE most profitable, necessary and precious knowledge which we can acquire, is the knowledge of the truth which must enlighten us, of the life which must animate us, and of the way which must lead us to happiness; in a word—the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the way, the truth, and the life. Call to mind then, my Brethren, the truths which I explained to you in my last instruction. You should know now what our divine Saviour Jesus Christ is. He is both God and man, Son of God and Son of man. As God, Jesus Christ is the second person of the most holy Trinity; as man, He is the son of the holy Virgin Mary; as God, He has a divine nature; as man, He has a human nature. In Jesus Christ these two natures are perfectly united, without being confounded; they do not form two persons, but the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ and His divinity, united together, constitute but one and the same person, the person of the Man-God. To-day we will consider why and how the Son of God was made man.

Why was the Son of God made man? “To work out our salvation,” is the short but significant answer of the Council of Nice. “It was for our salvation:” these few words suffice to make known to us the inestimable dignity of our souls, and the ineffable love of God for us. “As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned. . . . And not as it was by one sin, so also is the gift; for the judgment indeed was by one unto condemnation.”\* Yes, we were condemned to eternal perdition, for God must maintain the rights of

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\* Romans v: 12, 16.

His justice, and He could not leave sin unpunished. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary, after the sin of our first parents, that the human family should be lost forever, and plunged into the torments due to sin, or that a sufficient reparation should be offered to the Lord. But who could give that satisfaction which the justice of God demanded? Will it be you, O sinful man? Ah! if this reparation depended upon you, most miserable would you be, since your sin could never be forgiven! All the reparation you could possibly offer to God would never bear any proportion to the injury which you had to repair. No, you could never satisfy for your sin; for what is it to satisfy, unless it be to restore to the offended person as much honor at least as was taken away by the offence which had been committed? Now, what could you do, O man, when you abandoned God by disobedience? You committed against God an outrage of infinite magnitude. To efface this injury and to repair this outrage, it was necessary for you to present to the Lord a satisfaction of infinite value and merit. Could you have done so, sinner? You, who had nothing pleasing to offer to the Lord, but what was already His on a thousand other titles. Could an angel have come and satisfied for man? No, an angel could not; even his merits are not sufficiently great. Must man, therefore, perish? Oh, no, the mercy of the Lord will not forsake him in his misfortune, "that grace might reign by giving everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God has abundantly showered down His grace and His blessing. "He so loved the world that to redeem it, He delivered up His only Son."\* Sin must be punished, but the sinner will be saved: behold how mercy and truth have met in Jesus Christ; and it is in Him and through Him that justice and peace have kissed.

God ordains, and His divine Son comes on earth to clothe himself with our nature, to take upon himself all our iniquities, and to wash them in His blood, which for our redemption He poured out upon the cross, even to the last drop. Thus have we been redeemed from hell, our sin effaced, and satisfaction full and entire, nay, even superabundant satisfaction offered to the divine justice, by the human nature, in the person of Jesus Christ. This divine Saviour was

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\* Romans, v.



bruised for our sins, and he was wounded for our iniquities. Behold, why the Son of God was made man, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Virgin Mary.

When the time had arrived wherein He had resolved to save man, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the name of the virgin was Mary. And the angel being come in, said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: fear not Mary; for thou hast found grace with God: behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the most High shall over-shadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. . . . And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed." At the same instant, the only Son of God descended from the highest heavens into the chaste womb of Mary, invested himself there with our nature, took a body and a soul like ours, and became like unto us, sin only excepted.

Some time after, as Joseph was of the house and of the family of David, he went from Galilee in Judea, from the city of Nazareth to the city of David, which was called Bethlehem, there to be enrolled with Mary, his spouse, in obedience to the decree of Augustus Cæsar. While they were there, she found the days of her delivery were accomplished, and she brought forth her first born son, and wrapping Him in swaddling clothes, laid Him in a manger, because there there was no room for them in the inn.

No doubt, my Brethren, you are tempted to say that a place so mean and wretched, is by no means suitable to the grandeur and majesty of a God. Ah! the love of our Saviour made choice of



it, to make expiation for our pride, and to teach us humility. Yet, in the bosom of His humiliation, and the depths of His misery, this divine Infant was recognized as the sovereign Master of heaven and of earth. The heavens open, the angels descend all resplendent with light, and sing those magnificent words: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will." A bright star appears in the east, and calls the Gentiles to the cradle of the Desired of nations, to the crib wherein reposes the Saviour of the world. The wise men follow this star, which proceeds before them, they reach Bethlehem, and there prostrating themselves, adore their hidden God. Eight days after His birth, this divine Infant was circumcised and received the name of Jesus; after that He was presented in the temple to His heavenly Father, and soon, to escape the fury of King Herod, was compelled to fly with Mary and Joseph into the land of Egypt, where He remained until the death of His persecutor. The Gospel preserves almost a profound silence concerning all the time which elapsed from the return of our divine Saviour into His country, until His thirtieth year; only informing us that at the age of twelve years, He was found in the temple, astonishing the doctors of the law by the wisdom of His answers, and that afterward He dwelt at Nazareth, where He was subject to Joseph and to Mary.

Thus, my Brethren, I have briefly related to you what it is necessary for you to know concerning the Incarnation,—the birth and childhood of the Son of God, made man. It is doubtless enough, to penetrate your hearts with the most lively sentiments of gratitude at the sight of the ineffable love which God has manifested for us. Instead of overwhelming you and plunging you into eternal misery, behold how the Son of God, equal to His Father, the Word divine, by whom all things were made, comes into this world, to take upon himself our infirmities and our sins,—comes to pay our ransom to His heavenly Father, and becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to save our souls. Oh! how precious is your soul, since, to redeem it, God made man did not think He gave too much, when He gave His blood and His life. Oh! you who so heedlessly commit sin, who are so indifferent to the interests of your immortal soul, you who are so cold in the service of God, I beg of you, to remember that to redeem you,—the Son of God was made man,—

and that He suffered the most cruel torments,—the most shameful death, to expiate your sin and to satisfy supreme justice for you. May the remembrance of the great benefit of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of the redemption which He brought to the world, never depart from your minds and hearts! God, my Brethren, has conferred so many blessings upon us, let us show ourselves grateful, and let us return to the Lord love for love, heart for heart; let us be His unreservedly and entirely,—let us do well what He requires, and He will requite us according to His promise,—He will receive us into heaven, and make us partakers of His eternal happiness.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XII.

### THE INFANT SAVIOUR.

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“This day is born to you a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—ST. LUKE, ii: 11.

WHEN our divine Saviour was born, “there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flocks. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, . . . and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. . . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, that after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem; and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste: and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger.\*

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\* St. Luke: ii.

Let me, my Brethren, once more ask you to visit the manger where the Word made flesh reposes, and express to you the thoughts which the sight of this divine Infant excites in my heart. This Infant, born of you, O Mary; this Infant so weak, so tender, lying in a manger on a little straw, poorer than the child of the poorest man,—is the Word of God, the Son of the Eternal, the Son of the Most High. Yes; the Holy of Holies, the King of kings, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of lords, who poises the world in His hand,—is *here* a helpless babe, lying in a manger; divine Jesus, Thou art my God, and I adore Thee. You too, my Brethren, should bow down before the Saviour of the world, and say to Him: Thou art our God and we adore Thee. But, since Jesus is the Lord our God, the sovereign Master of heaven and earth, let us obey His word, keep His commandments, and submit our minds and hearts to His adorable doctrine; let us walk in His footsteps, follow the example He has given us, for He wished to be our model. It would be but little use for us to prostrate ourselves at the feet of the Son of God, and say: Lord! Lord! What avail these tokens of adoration, and these fine words, if our hearts do not speak; if we do not adore Him in spirit and in truth? Now, does that man sincerely adore the Lord, who despises His law and refuses to comply with His holy will? Certainly not. Ah! my Brethren, placing our hands upon our hearts, let us examine ourselves! Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to do good to those who injure us, to pray for those who persecute us; and is it not true that our hearts and souls are filled with enmity and hatred,—that we are unable to bear the slightest offence, and seek continually to be revenged? Is it thus that Jesus Christ is to be adored? He says to us: “Be meek and humble of heart;” and we always seek to rule and to be exalted; indignation and anger take possession of us, the moment we imagine that some one has failed to show us that respect which we imagine to be our due. Is it thus that we ought to adore Jesus Christ? He would have us place all confidence in our Father who is in heaven, and who takes care of us; and yet at the smallest pain or the most trifling annoyance, we have the hardihood to complain and murmur against divine Providence, as if God had forsaken us. The Lord warns us that he who does not carry his cross, and who refuses to follow Him, is not worthy of Him: and yet, my Brethren, we



are unwilling to mortify our flesh, with its desires; on the contrary, we know only how to follow our base propensities and yield to all the demands of our vile passions. Where then is our obedience to the Lord? Where is our submission to Jesus Christ, our God, who will also be our sovereign Judge? For this divine Infant who reposes in that manger, so full of gentleness and sweetness, will, on the day of judgment, come borne on the clouds of heaven, full of glory and of majesty, surrounded by millions of angels, to judge all men, princes and peasants, and render to every one according to his works; to some eternal glory, to others eternal pains. Divine Jesus, I adore Thee, my desire is to obey Thee, to follow and imitate Thee; be merciful to me, O my God! O my Saviour!

How many great and sacred things does not the word *Saviour* contain! What a benefit that which the love of God has granted us! Suppose, my Brethren, some terrible danger threatened our lives,—an immense conflagration, a frightful earthquake, or a vast inundation. What fear, what awe, what dread would it not cause in us? But suppose that there comes a man who with authority controls the fire, the sea and the elements; who delivers us from death and saves us; who even does more, for he not only preserves us, but he heaps favors and riches upon us; beyond all doubt we would love this generous benefactor, we would even kiss his foot-prints! Well, my Brethren, this man so worthy of our love, is but a faint image of our divine Saviour.

We had sinned in Adam, were children of wrath, heaven was closed against us; we should have passed from this vale of tears into eternal woe, for we had violated the law of God, and were incapable of making satisfaction to His infinite justice. But God loved us, and He sent among us His only begotten Son, in whom He was well pleased. This divine Emmanuel came, clothed Himself with our nature, was loaded with our iniquities, and blotted them out by dying for us on the cross. We should have been lost, but Jesus has saved us; we should have been utterly abandoned, and held in bondage by the devil; we should have eternally suffered in the gloomy dungeons of hell; but Jesus has restored us to the friendship of His Father,—He has made us children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

No, my Brethren, we will no longer be ungrateful; we will



delight to recall to mind the blessings which our bountiful Saviour has conferred upon us. But if gratitude reign in our hearts, must it not show itself in all our conduct,—in our whole lives? There is no one among us who can not sometimes say: be Thou blessed, O my Jesus, because Thou hast redeemed me, because Thou hast saved me! But it is not words that the Saviour asks of us,—He wishes to have holy works,—worthy fruits of gratitude, and this is the only means by which we can be saved. No doubt, our divine Lord renders salvation possible, even easy for us, but, to obtain it, we must coöperate with the graces which the adorable sacrifice of the cross has merited for us; we must render ourselves worthy of this great blessing by constantly doing the will of God. Woe be to us, if at the end of our lives it be found that we have not profited by the blessings which the Saviour brought us in abundance, and if we be found wanting in gratitude and fidelity toward our best friend and greatest benefactor, who has done every thing that it was possible for him to do, to gain our love and win our hearts.

If the most powerful monarch in the world were to descend from his throne and come to dwell among his subjects; were he to seek out by preference the poorest; to speak to them with benignity; to sit at their table, eat of their bread; wish to be accounted their friend, their brother; and beg them to bestow upon him these endearing names; who would not love this good king? Who would not be devoted to him, in life and in death? My Brethren, what is this compared with all the King of heaven has done for us? The Word was God, and the Word made Himself flesh, and came to dwell among us, poor sinners; He was rich, says the Apostle, and He made himself poor, to enrich us; He chose to be born of poor parents, in an old, decayed stable; the first men from whom He condescended to receive homage were poor shepherds; for thirty years He lived in the house of a poor carpenter, and was occupied at the trade of His foster-father; He afterward had no place whereon to rest His head, and He lived only on the alms which some pious souls placed in the hands of His disciples; at last, for us He became the Man of Sorrows, died on the cross, shedding even the last drop of His blood; but not until He had instituted the adorable sacrament of his love,—the divine Eucharist; for He wished to remain among those whom He loves, all days, even to the end of time, to

be their consolation and their strength. Yes, my God, Thou didst love us to the end,—even to excess.

My Brethren, love demands love; love then your divine Saviour, who has so much loved you! Remember the consoling promise He has made us: “If you love,” He says, “I will come to take up my abode in you.” But let us also remember that He requires that we should prove the sincerity of our love by keeping His commandments faithfully: “He that loves me, keeps my commandments.”

Divine Jesus, Thou art the Son of the Most High, Thou art our Lord, our God: from the bottom of our hearts we adore Thee, and lay at Thy feet our solemn promise of remaining ever faithful to Thee, of obeying Thy divine word, and of walking constantly in the ways of Thy commandments. Thou art our Saviour; Thou hast died to save us from eternal death; Thou hast blotted out sin and broken down the walls that stood between us and God; Thou hast opened the gates of heaven for us. Be Thou then praised, O sweet Jesus, forever and ever! O bountiful God, how much hast Thou loved us! And how have we repaid Thy love? We have spent many years in lukewarmness, in sin and in impenitence, lost in the pursuit of earthly things, and forgetful of heaven, of the glorious paradise to which Thou invitest us, and where Thou awaitest us. Pardon, O my Saviour, pardon us, that we begin so late to love Thee. Grant that the merits of Thy sufferings and Thy death may not be lost in our regard. Be our guide, our support, and our strength, that nothing may be able to separate us from Thee, who art the truth we must hear, the way we must follow, and the life wherewith we must be animated, if we would enjoy the life and the happiness of heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON XIII.

## FOURTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

## LIFE OF OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR.

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“Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”—APOCALYPSE, i: 5.

THE heavens have diffused their sweet dews, and the clouds rained down the Just One. The earth has opened its bosom and given birth to the Saviour. Jesus, the divine Redeemer promised to the world when our first parent sinned, has just been born. Angels announce to the poor the miraculous birth of the Messiah; kings come from the East, prostrate themselves at His feet and adore Him. But, behold another king, a cruel tyrant seeks to put Him to death: the God made man takes refuge in the land of Egypt, and lives in obscurity, until He has attained His thirtieth year. At length the important time foretold by the prophet, had come, when the divine Saviour was to commence His heavenly mission, to preach forgiveness of sins, to invite all men to repentance, to overturn the empire of Satan, and to immolate himself for the salvation of the world. I would gladly lay before you the entire life of Jesus, but I must content myself with recalling to your minds some of its principal events. Be sure that you attend well to what I say. Jesus leaves His retreat, quits His humble abode at Nazareth, comes to the banks of the Jordan, enters the river, and requests John to pour on His head the waters of baptism. My Brethren, Jesus did not require the baptism of penance, which John gave; He was not obliged to do those penitential acts; He who had come to blot out the sins of the world, could not be himself stained with sin. He was the pure and spotless Lamb, and if He chose to receive the baptism of John, it was to leave us a noble example of humility, and to sanctify the water, which was afterward to efface, in reality, our sins in the sacrament of baptism. Yes, Jesus humbled himself,



on the banks of the Jordan, but His Father hastened to glorify Him. The heavens open; the Holy Ghost, in the form of a dove, descends on our divine Saviour; and a voice, the voice of God, the Father, is heard from the highest heavens, saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased."\* Jesus leaves the banks of the Jordan, goes into the desert, fasts for forty days and forty nights, and afterward permits the devil to tempt Him. In vain does the infernal spirit exert all his malice, employ all his wickedness, and call in action all his cunning: he prevails not over the spirit and heart of the Saviour of the world, who was soon to crush this serpent's head. But this temptation which Jesus suffered in the desert, on the eve of undertaking His divine mission, proclaims loudly to us that we must be on our guard against the artifices of the devil, and watch over ourselves, lest we be surprised by Satan, who did not fear attacking even the Holy of Holies!

Jesus comes forth from the desert and declares that He is the Messiah promised to men; He travels through villages, market-places and cities; He preaches in the temple, on the highways, on the sea-shore; He reveals to the people those sublime truths which are the object of our faith; streams of enchanting eloquence flow from His divine lips; He speaks with authority, He speaks as no man ever spoke before; He shows us, that in God, we have a Father, in other men, brothers; He demonstrates clearly the nothingness of the things of this world; He tells us the importance of salvation, the value of heavenly things, the happiness of the elect, and how we may attain that happiness; He teaches us to submit our minds and hearts to the word and the will of God; to subdue our passions, to practice virtue; and to support the truth of His words He works the most wonderful prodigies, evidences indeed of His omnipotence, but no less proofs of His goodness. He speaks, and His word puts to flight the whole train of evils that afflict us. He speaks, and fever, leprosy, and all infirmities disappear. He speaks, and the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak. He speaks, and the devil retreats in shame and confusion. He speaks, and the grave gives up its victims, and the dead come to life.

While performing these wonders, Jesus at the same time pre-

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\* St. Luke, iii: 22.



sents himself to the world, as the most perfect model of the most exalted virtues! Yes, divine Jesus, you alone can say: "I came that you may have a model." Jesus was humble: I came, says he, to serve, and not to be served. Often did He forbid the miracles He wrought to be published, and he imposed silence on the demons, who were forced to cry out that He was truly the Son of God. In a transport of admiration, the people were about to make Him their king, and Jesus retires and hides himself from their pressing solicitation. He asks not His own glory, but that of His Father. Jesus was meek and bountiful,—He rejected, He repulsed no one. The Apostles wished to drive away the little children that were brought to Him for His blessing, and He said to them: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for the kingdom of heaven is for such; . . . unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Two of His disciples ask that fire should come from the heavens, to destroy a city which had refused to receive Him. You know not, He says to them, of what spirit you are; I came not to destroy men, but to save them. When they sought to make Him pronounce sentence of death against the woman taken in adultery; "he that is without sin among you," He says, "let him first cast a stone at her." He bore with patience the rudeness of the Apostles, and the importunities of the sick. What do I say? He invited them to Him. "Come," He says, "come all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Jesus was tender and full of compassion. He wept for the death of Lazarus, His friend; He shed tears over Jerusalem, and beholding that unfortunate city, He exclaimed: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!" He beheld the tears of the poor widow of Nain, and hastened to console her by restoring her dead son to life. He received with benignity the sinners who desired to turn from their evil ways, and He rebuked only those who were hardened in vice; therefore it was that He denounced so severely the proud Pharisee and the hypocritical doctor of the law. His sole business was the glory of God and the salvation of men; and He frequently spent whole nights in prayer, after having employed the day in doing good to all, in glorifying His Father, extolling the

happiness of seeing and of loving Him, and in traveling about, on foot, under the burning rays of a scorching sun, in quest of His lost sheep. He was, in truth, the good shepherd, who laid down His life for His flock. He lived in great poverty, and well might He say to the Jews: "The birds of the air have their nests, and the fox its den, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head." O Son of God, Master, and Lord of heaven and earth, Thou wast rich, and Thou hast made Thyself poor, to teach us that there are no true riches, but the riches of eternity; and that all the wealth of this earth is nothing but vanity. Thou hast said: "Woe to the rich! blessed are the poor!" because Thou wouldst have us know that riches too frequently are the fatal thorns which stifle in our hearts the good seeds of salvation.

Behold, my Brethren, what the life our divine Saviour was while on earth: "He spent it doing good." How different from the conqueror, who estimates his days by his victories, that is to say, by the evils which he causes and the sorrow he increases;—Jesus, on the contrary, the meekest of the children of men, reckons his days by His blessings. In the towns, the market-places and the cities, there are no blind, nor sick, nor lepers, because Jesus of Nazareth hath passed that way. Yes, He is the Holy of Holies, and He manifested His divinity as the Divinity is accustomed to manifest itself by acts of patience, of charity, and of love; and yet notwithstanding all His blessings and wonderful virtues, He was hated by the world, by those corrupt men to whom He declared the truth which condemned them. Some of them, carnal men, who expected a Messiah who should subdue the nations of the earth to his empire, would not acknowledge the Saviour of Israel, in the person of the poor and humble Jesus, whom they called with contempt, "the son of the carpenter." Others, and above all, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the priests and the senators persecuted Him, calumniated Him, and despised Him, because He censured their pride, their avarice, their hypocrisy, and the numberless other vices which made these men like whited sepulchres, fair indeed without, but within, full of dead mens' bones and of all corruption. They hated Jesus, and yet they had nothing wherewith to reproach Him, for they observed silence when he publicly challenged them to convict Him of sin. Often did they try to surprise Him in His words, but in vain; He always

detected their malice and ignorance, and confounded them by His answers. When the true Israelites,—whose hearts were right,—at sight of Jesus exclaimed: Blessed is He who comes to us in the name of the Lord, the hatred of the wicked, on hearing those praises and acclamations, knew no bounds, and they resolved to put to death, the Just One, the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. I will speak to you, in our next instruction, of the chalice of sorrows which our divine Saviour was compelled to drink, even to the dregs.

I conclude, my Brethren, by repeating to you the words which our Saviour addressed to His disciples: “I come, that you might have a model.” Yes, Jesus came to redeem us and to be our model. Let us therefore act, let us always conduct ourselves, in a manner conformable to that which this good Master has taught us. He was humble, meek, patient and charitable; let us therefore be humble, meek, patient and charitable. He labored for His Father’s glory in procuring our salvation; let us coöperate with the glory of God by advancing in the practice of good works, and let us do this with the more zeal and perseverance, as it is only by following this path, that we can arrive at heaven, where Jesus our Saviour reigns, to whom be all glory, honor and power forever and ever.—AMEN.

## SERMON XIV.

### FOURTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.

“He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—PHILIPPIANS, ii: 8

“AND the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”\* He came to recall us from the ways of error,—to reëstablish us in

\* St. John, i: 14.



the path of truth. He has made known to us the God of heaven, and in our God He has revealed to us a Father and the most tender of Fathers. He showed us the worship we ought to pay to God, that of the spirit and of the heart. He revealed to us the sublime destiny which awaits us in eternity; that immortal life, filled with inexpressible delights, when we shall see God face to face, such as He is in himself, and to which we can attain by the practice of the truths which He taught and of the precepts He imposed. To confirm the truth of His heavenly doctrine, Jesus performed great miracles, prodigies of His power, and still more prodigies of charity and mercy. He was the most amiable, the meekest, the holiest of the children of men, and yet He had enemies. To-day, I will speak to you of the chalice of sorrows which they made Him drink, even to the dregs.

Jesus Christ had foretold to His Apostles that He would be delivered into the hands of wicked men,—the scribes and chief priests; that they would pronounce against Him the sentence of death; that He would be contemned and mocked, scourged and crucified. The time has now come when this divine Saviour is about to consummate His sacrifice, and to lay down His life for the salvation of the world. Accompanied by His Apostles, He proceeds to the place wherein He had appointed to take His last supper, and eat His last passover with them. Before, however, He would depart out of this life, He wished to leave them the most precious pledge of His love and tenderness,—He desired to institute the adorable sacrament of His body and blood. He then “took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave it to His disciples, and said: Take ye and eat: this is my body which is given for you. . . . And taking the chalice, He gave thanks; and gave it to them saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins. Do this in commemoration of me.”\* Many more things He said with the the most tender affection to His dear disciples. Seeing them oppressed by a weight of sadness, He consoled them, by promising not to leave them orphans, and to send them the Holy Ghost, who would be with them all days, and would make them understand all

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\* St. Matthew, xxvi,—St. Luke, xxii.



that He had taught them. He recommended them to the all-powerful protection of His Father, whom He besought with all His soul to preserve them, to defend them against the temptations of the enemy, to maintain among them perfect union of hearts, to the end that not one of them might be lost, but that all might be with Him in the eternal happiness of heaven. We can not doubt, my Brethren, that it was not for the Apostles alone our bountiful Saviour addressed this fervent prayer to His heavenly Father, but also for us, who, converted by their preaching, have had the happiness of being called to the knowledge of the truth through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Having sung a hymn, Jesus went with His Apostles to the mount of Olives, where He was accustomed to pray. Here He represented to Himself all He was about to suffer, during His painful passion, and giving way to the feelings of nature, was seized with fear and excessive sadness. Thrice did He prostrate himself on the ground, and pray: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt. A bloody sweat flows in large drops from every part of His body to the earth, while reduced almost to His agony, Jesus but perseveres the more in prayer. Then an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen Him: rising up, Jesus went to His disciples and said to them: "Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation. Behold, he is at hand that will betray me." As He yet spoke, Judas, whom the money of the scribes and Pharisees had seduced, and who betrayed His divine Master, arrived, followed by a large body of soldiers. But Jesus, knowing all that was about to happen, said to them: "Whom seek ye? they answered, Jesus of Nazareth: Jesus says to them, I am He; at which word they all immediately went back and fell to the ground." No doubt, my Brethren, the Son of God could have escaped the fury of His enemies, for a word from His mouth was enough to prostrate them to the earth; but He loved us, He wished to save us, and to reconcile us to His Father, He chose to die. Hence He permitted His enemies to seize His divine person, to load Him with chains, to drag Him, as a vile criminal, before the tribunal of the high-priest, Caiphas. Lying witnesses accused Him, and He spoke not. But when the high-priest bid Him, in the name of the living God, say, whether He

was the Christ, the Son of God, He immediately answered: "Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."\* At the same time, the high-priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses. And they all cried out, He is guilty of death. Our divine Lord was then delivered up to insolent wretches, who spit in His face, beat Him with their fists and buffeted Him, saying, prophesy unto us, O Christ: who is it that struck Thee? The next day He was conducted to the house of Pontius Pilate, at that time the Roman governor of Judea. Calumny was the weapon employed by the enemies of Jesus, and here they made a horrible use of it, for they durst accuse the God of Sanctity of being a rebel to authority, and of having excited the people to sedition. Pilate discovered in the malignity of their accusations the shameful motive which actuated them. He perceived that all these charges were but the offspring of envy and hatred; yet weak man as he was, he had not the courage to confound calumny and vindicate oppressed innocence. Nevertheless he desired to rescue Jesus from the death to which the Jews clamorously sought to make him condemn Him. He caused Him, therefore, to be scourged, a crown of thorns fastened on His head, an old purple robe to be thrown on His shoulders, in His hand a reed to be placed as a scepter, and thus arrayed, he exhibited Him to the people, hoping that the sight of Jesus reduced to this sad state, would excite their compassion. Vain hope! the criminal and cowardly expedient saved not the innocent. With greater fury did the Jews cry out: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Let His blood be upon us and upon our children! And Pilate gave up Jesus to them to be crucified. To die on the cross was the most painful and at the same time the most disgraceful of punishments: none were condemned to this death but slaves, assassins and highway robbers. Hardly had the sentence of death been pronounced, than the Jews placed upon the shoulders of our divine Redeemer the heavy cross on which He was to suffer. Like another Isaac, He bore to the summit of Calvary the wood, on which He was to immolate himself as a holocaust. The executioners extended

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\* St. Matthew, xxxvi: 64.

Him on the cross, drove large nails into His hands and feet, and to outrage Him still more, they crucified Him between two thieves. For many hours Jesus Christ remained suspended on the cross, a prey to the most excruciating pains, and exposed to the blasphemous insults of the wicked and abandoned crowd by which He was surrounded. At last, crying out with a loud voice, He said: My Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. And bowing down His head He expired. To assure themselves of His death, a soldier pierced His side with a lance, and immediately there issued from it blood and water. Then Joseph of Arimathea hastening to the house of Pilate, asked and obtained permission to bury the body of Jesus. Aided by Nicodemus, a doctor of the law and a secret disciple of the Saviour, he took down Jesus from His cross, and having wrapped His body in a winding sheet, consigned it to a tomb, in which no one had been placed before. The chief priests and Pharisees did not forget that our Lord had foretold that He would rise again from the dead on the third day. To falsify this prophecy they went to the sepulchre, carefully closed it, and setting their seal on the stone, placed a body of soldiers there to guard it. All was consummated; the Scriptures were fulfilled: the Just One was put to death,—the devil was vanquished, the justice of God was satisfied, man was restored to the friendship of his Maker, heaven was opened, and it was now possible for man to attain it, for Jesus, the Son of God, had died for us on the cross.

Oh! how great and how terrible must be the injury offered to God by mortal sin, since, to expiate it, He willed that His only Son should suffer such excruciating tortures! How great was the love of Jesus for men! For us, my Brethren, to cleanse us from our sins, He suffered so much! He suffered death, even the death of the cross!

My Brethren, let us never cease to love this bountiful Saviour, who has so tenderly loved us. And let us never commit sin, for it is the origin of all our evils, and the cause of all the sufferings of the Son of God. He that commits sin becomes the slave of sin, and hates his own soul,—that soul so precious, to redeem which, the Son of God did not think it too much to shed the last drop of His blood! Whenever, then, temptation assails you, whenever you perceive that sin is about to enter your heart, cast a glance at your Saviour, dying on His cross, and say to yourselves: “Ah! Jesus



Christ died on the cross for me,—to wash out my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sins. How can I offend Him again, and be so ungrateful, and at the same time so senseless, as to lose the fruits of the sufferings and the death of my God! No, I will rather die, than sin again: death in this case will be to me a great gain; it will be the beginning of life,—of eternal life,—when I shall see and adore my Saviour and my God for endless ages.” Yes, my Brethren, in times of temptation call to mind what your soul has cost,—the blood of a God; see the enormity of sin,—it nails Jesus to the cross, it crucifies the only begotten Son of God. There was needed the blood of a God to open heaven for you, and mortal sin would close it against you once more. Be you then faithful,—sin no more, and God will be your reward exceedingly great for all eternity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XV.

### FIFTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

## RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

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“He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

HAVING spent on this earth about thirty years of a most pure and holy life, replete with every good work, Jesus our Saviour, became a victim of the envy and hatred of the Jews, suffered the most painful and excruciating torments at their hands, and at last died on a cross between two thieves. He gave His life to redeem us from eternal death; He died because He loved us. Behold, my Brethren, the grand and consoling truths which made the subject of our last instruction. To-day I intend to explain the fifth article of the Apostles’ Creed: “He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead.” Be attentive, I beg of you. When our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, His soul was separated from



His body, but the divinity remained united to both. The body was placed in a tomb, and the soul descended into hell. What is this place which the Scriptures designate by the name of *hell*, to which the Son of God descended after His death? It signifies what the word expresses, namely, that it is a *lower* place and under the earth: It is in "the lower parts of the earth."\* To *this place* it was, as St. Paul teaches us in express terms, that our loving Lord did not disdain to descend, before He ascended into heaven and took possession of His glory.

But there are three subterraneous abodes, to which the souls of men descended who died before the coming of the Christ. Now, which of those three was it that was filled with joy at His divine presence? Did He go into the *hell* of the damned,—into that dark and hideous prison, where the wicked are buried, and where they must forever endure the torments they have deserved? It was not to this abode of darkness and of horrors, that our divine Redeemer went; surely not; the Son of God did not descend into those frightful dungeons, where all order is overturned, and from which there is no redemption. The second *hell* is *purgatory*,—an abode of pains and sufferings, but of temporal and transitory pains. *There* the souls of the just, stained with even the slightest imperfection, are cleansed, like gold in the crucible, until they are entirely purified. But it was not either to this place that our divine Lord went. And why? because, though these souls were dear to Jesus, for they were holy, nevertheless, they were not yet purified and holy enough to be found worthy of enjoying the vision and presence of their God. The third subterraneous abode which the Scriptures call by the name of *hell*, is Limbo. Here it was that the just and the saints of the Old Testament, who died before the coming of Jesus Christ, were detained until He had opened the gates of heaven for them. For before the coming of Jesus Christ, heaven was closed to men, and Jesus alone by His death could open it for them. Not Abel the just, nor Abraham, the father of the faithful, nor the Patriarchs could be admitted. Not Moses, the mediator of the old law; nor Job, who according to the judgment of God himself, had not his equal on earth; nor John the Baptist, the greatest

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\* Ephesians, iv: 9.

of the children of men ; in a word, no one could attain the glory of heaven, before the Son of God had opened the way by His death.

Limbo was a place of rest, but yet a place of incomplete rest ; for complete rest can be enjoyed only in the bosom and possession of God. It was a place of light, but of light not yet perfect ; this can only be found in the vision of God. It was a paradise, compared to the hell of the damned ; for, if they did not as yet possess God, at least they had a full assurance of one day possessing Him ; and Job could there repeat to the other holy souls : “ I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh and with my eyes I will see Him.” It was here, indeed, that the Saviour of the world descended after His death, to console those souls so holy, and so dear to His heart. How great the joy which must have filled the hearts of these saints, when at last they saw appear their divine Liberator, Him whom they had so long expected ; Him, by faith in whom they had wrought out their salvation, the hope of whose coming was their only consolation, whose morning dawn had been seen by some among them, and through them announced to the world ! Yes, deep and very great was their joy ; profound their gratitude, when they beheld this bountiful Saviour, who, not content with giving His life for them, had deigned to descend into the bosom of the earth to announce to them in person, that He had vanquished hell,—that the work of their redemption was accomplished,—that He had come to free them from their prisons, and conduct them to the happiness of heaven.

Our divine Lord did not remain long in Limbo. He had predicted that He would rise again the third day after death. He had said to His Apostles : “ Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon : And after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again.”\* No, the Lord would not allow His “ holy One to see corruption, nor leave His soul in hell.”† It was Jesus who said by the mouth of the prophet : “ O death, I will be thy death ; O hell, I will be thy bite.”‡ In vain did they seal the stone

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\* St. Luke, xviii : 31—34.    † Psalms xv : 10.    ‡ Osee, xiii : 14.

which closed the sepulchre, and place a guard around it. Jesus rises and comes forth from the tomb without removing the stone. A violent earthquake follows, and an angel descends from heaven, rolls back the stone, and seats himself thereon. His garments are white as snow, and His countenance is as lightning. So frightened are the guards, that they become as dead men. Pious women come to embalm the body of Jesus; they enter the sepulchre, but not finding the Saviour there, hasten to inform Peter and John. They say to them: "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have put Him." The two Apostles run to the tomb, but find nothing in it, except the linen cloths and the napkin that had been about His head. But behold now Jesus appears to Magdalene,—and angels speak to these holy women, whose faith had brought them to the grave of their divine Master: "Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said." Then they leave the sepulchre, seized with fear yet transported with joy. At the same time Jesus appears to them. They cast themselves at His feet and adore Him; then Jesus says to them: "Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee; there they shall see me."\* The pious women hasten to bear the glad tidings to the disciples; but these are unwilling to believe their words. No doubt, they ardently desired the resurrection of their divine Master, yet they fear too much that He had not risen, to believe easily that He had. While the Saviour is thus giving proofs of His resurrection, the guards hasten to relate the fact to the leading men of the synagogue, who give them large sums of money to induce them to conceal the truth. They bribe them to say, that they had fallen asleep, and that during their sleep, the disciples came and stole away the body of their Master. It was a vain expedient, for who can receive the testimony of a sleeping witness? How senseless it was for the Jews to credit this falsehood? If the guards watched, why did they not prevent the body of Jesus from being removed? If they were asleep, how could they see it taken away? and if they saw nothing, of what avail was their testimony? No, the Son of God did not remain among the dead; He has risen from death, and to prove it, He has shown himself to His Apostles and to more than

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\* St. Matthew, xxviii: 10.



five hundred of His disciples together; He conversed with them, and He ate and drank with them. In testimony of His resurrection, the Apostles have shed their blood and given their lives. This is evidence that no one can refuse to admit.

Jesus, our Saviour, rose gloriously from the grave, and His resurrection assures us, that one day we too shall rise from the dead: "He was the first born from among the dead," and He will be followed by His servants. The same divine power that gave life to the body of Jesus, will also unite our souls once more to our bodies, and they will assume a new life. O ye sinners, who live without remorse in sin, how profound is the sleep of your conscience! O, ye vain worldlings, who labor only for your bodies, who continually indulge them, and grant them every thing which they desire, to the detriment of your immortal souls, which you neglect,—know ye that a day will come, when you will rise forth alive from the bosom of the grave, and that, if sin reign in you until death, and if death overtake you in impenitence, you will be tormented, both body and soul, for all eternity! But you, ye just and pious souls, who suffer in poverty and contempt, whom sorrow pursues and misery oppresses with all its rigor, but who love your God, who are submissive to His adorable will, and receive with resignation the cross He sends you, console yourselves, for your Redeemer liveth; He hath risen; and hereafter the day will come when you too will rise from the corruption of the tomb, to live the life of the blessed in the paradise of God, where your divine Saviour hath preceded you, where He is your mediator with His Father, and where He ceases not continually to intercede in your behalf.—AMEN.



## SERMON XVI.

## SIXTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

## ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

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"He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty."—APOSTLES' CREED.

THE only Son of God was made man, and became like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted. He died on the cross for the salvation of the world. His body was placed in a tomb; His soul descended into Limbo to deliver the holy souls who were waiting there until the blood of our Saviour should wash away and blot out the sins of the world; which was necessary before they could enter into glory. The third day after the painful and cruel torments of the cross, Christ came forth gloriously from the grave, as He had foretold. Behold, my Brethren, what I explained to you in my last instruction. Now, let us turn our attention to the sixth article of our creed, an article which will make the subject of this day's instruction.

Christ rises from the dead, ascends into heaven, and seats himself at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. Listen, my Brethren, to the account which the Evangelist St. Luke furnishes us, concerning the wonderful Ascension of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, into heaven. After His resurrection, our divine Redeemer remained during forty days on earth, showing himself frequently to His Apostles and disciples, instructing them in many very important things; such as the establishment of His Church, the propagation of the Gospel, all that regarded the reign of God in the hearts of men, and every thing calculated to bring souls to the happiness of heaven. At last, when all the Apostles and disciples were assembled at Jerusalem, Jesus appears to them for the last time. He takes a seat at their table, eats and drinks with them. During the

repast, He reproaches them, but with great benignity, for their want of faith in His resurrection, of which He had now come to give them still another evident and palpable proof; He imposes upon them the mission of preaching His word to every creature, and commands them to travel the whole world, propagating His religion and spreading His divine doctrine among all nations. To inspire them with courage and penetrate their hearts with a generous confidence, He bestows upon them the divine power of working miracles, thus to give greater force to the truths which they were to announce, and which the world, converted at the sight of these prodigies of the omnipotence of God, might embrace and practice.

Our divine Lord then rises, and, followed by His Apostles and disciples, goes out from the city, and proceeds to the mount of Olives. There His agony had commenced; thence too, will He take His flight into glory. He gives His Apostles and disciples the most consoling assurance that He would never cease to protect them; recommends them to remain at Jerusalem, until they should receive the Holy Ghost, the Comforter whom He had promised to send them; He speaks to them with all the tenderness of a father addressing his children, whom he is about to leave; raises His hand, blesses them, recommends them to the favor and protection of His heavenly Father; and then, full of glory and majesty, elevates himself in the air, and mounts gradually toward heaven. For some time the Apostles gaze on the form of their departing Master; but at length, the clouds of heaven conceal Him from their view. Jesus continues His ascent into heaven, seats himself at the right hand of the Almighty Father, to whom He is perfectly equal, and from whom He receives, as man, the first place in heaven, above every creature.

Jesus ascends into heaven; He goes to take possession of the glory which was due to Him. He had come down from the bosom of His Father, to take, on earth, the form of a slave, to live in poverty and disgrace,—to die in torments, to pour out His blood on the cross for the redemption of the human race. All has been consummated, the mission of the Man-God has been accomplished, and behold, “from the height of the cross, He shall draw all unto Him.” The Son of man has crushed the serpent’s head; sin has

been blotted out ; the empire of the devil annihilated ; error checked and light diffused ; and the God of heaven and earth shall be adored in spirit and in truth. Yes, Jesus hath glorified His Father among men, it was just that He should receive from His Father infinite glory in the eternal mansions. But before quitting the earth, He said to us : " Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God ; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself ; that where I am, you also may be."\*

Christ ascended into heaven, to prepare a place for us there ; He himself has said : " Where I am, you also may be." A day will come, when it will be permitted us to participate in the glory of our divine Saviour. It will be so if we place ourselves among the number of the true servants of Jesus Christ ; if we preserve in our hearts and manifest in our conduct, the holy commandments which He has given us ; if, in fine, we endeavor to render ourselves like to Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our model. " A faithful saying," says St. Paul to Timothy ; " if we be dead with Christ, we shall live also with Him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him ; if we deny Him, He will also deny us."† Where Christ is, there also must His servants be.

O ! divine Jesus, let me dwell with Thee in eternity, in the tabernacles of Thy Father ! But, O my Saviour, I am so weak, and I fall into so many sins ! Must not the splendor of Thy glory overwhelm the unhappy sinner, who would dare aspire to the happiness of heaven ? This fear would fill my soul with desolation, did I not know that Thou hast ascended into heaven to be our advocate and mediator with Thy Father. " My little children," writes St. John to the first Christians ; " these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just. And He is the propitiation for our sins."‡

Yes, my Brethren, Jesus Christ is our advocate in heaven ; He who destroyed sin, is our Mediator with God ; He is *there* under the eyes of His Father, as a constant victim and perpetual sacrifice

\* St. John, xiv : 1, 2, 3.

† 2 Timothy, ii : 1, 2.

‡ 1 Epistle of St. John, ii : 1, 2.

for our sins. Should not this saving truth fill our souls with sweet and consoling hope! Jesus intercedes for us! God the Father did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up for us, and how, after having betowed upon us this gift, can He refuse us any thing which this divine Saviour asks for us? Oh! we have an advocate whose influence over the heart of God is infinite, we can, therefore, reach heaven.

My Brethren, heaven is our country, and it is there only we can find happiness. We are only passengers on earth, and we see here only empty baubles, vanities, deceptions and sufferings. Let us not allow our hearts to be foolishly attached to the things of this world; let us remember that we live not for time, but for eternity. Let us seek the things that are in heaven, where Jesus Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; let us taste the things that are of heaven, and not the things of earth. When Jesus Christ shall appear, He who is our life, we too shall appear with Him in glory, if we walk in His footsteps, follow the example He has given us, obey the rules and precepts which He has imposed upon us, and love God and our neighbor as He has commanded. We shall reap in eternity what we have sown in time. Let us, therefore, keep our hearts raised up to heaven; let us have God always before our eyes, let us glorify Him, by advancing in the practice of good works, and then as vigilant and faithful servants, we shall deserve to ascend to the mansions of our divine Master.—AMEN.



## SERMON XVII.

SIXTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

## ON HEAVEN.

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“I will be thy reward exceedingly great.”—GENESIS.

SUCH, my Brethren, were the magnificent words by which the Lord encouraged the fidelity and supported the obedience of His servant Abraham. “I will be thy reward exceedingly great:” this admirable promise, the Lord deigns to make to all His children; very often He calls it to our recollection by the inspirations of His Holy Spirit, who searches the recesses of our hearts, and excites us to the practice of virtue; yet more frequently by the mouth of His ministers, who cease not to exhort us to do what God commands, and to avoid what He prohibits. God wishes to make us happy; He desires that we become citizens of heaven; He wishes to be our reward exceedingly great; but He requires that we render ourselves worthy of it. What is the happiness of Heaven, and what must be done to obtain it? Here, my Brethren, is a most interesting matter. Do not refuse your attention. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Has Heaven been created for us? Were we made for Heaven? Yes, my Brethren, it was for no other creatures, but angels and men, that the hand of the Eternal has raised up the magnificent palace of Heaven, and created a paradise of inexhaustible delights. The earth is only a place of exile; we have here no lasting city; our country is in Heaven. We will one day reach it; we will be fellow citizens with the angels, and God will be our reward, our happiness, our recompense exceedingly great, in that kingdom which He has prepared for us from the beginning. But, my Brethren, what is this kingdom to which we are called? As long as our soul

is inclosed within the prison of this mortal flesh, all the powers of the mind united are unable to penetrate the habitation of God,—they can never comprehend the extent of the happiness which the saints there drink in deep draughts,—for this happiness is ineffable. St. Paul was taken up to the third Heaven and saw the mysteries of God: but returning to the earth he was incapable of telling what he saw,—he could only give utterance to his astonishment in these words: “The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.”\* I can not, therefore, my Brethren, unfold before your eyes what remains hidden in the kingdom of Heaven, and I must confine myself with relating to you what our faith teaches us about this land of happiness. Faith teaches us, that in Heaven, all the desires of man will be satisfied; all his wishes will be accomplished; whatever he desires, he will enjoy; every thing he wishes to know, he will see, and comprehend; whatever he is capable of loving, he will possess; he will be forever infinitely happy. The happiness and prosperity which we may enjoy in this life, are always attended with apprehensions. In fact, we fear that we will be deprived of them. To-day, you enjoy sound and perfect health; but may not sickness be your lot to-morrow? You float along the current of worldly happiness,—you abound in riches; but soon, perhaps, you will be plunged into the deepest misery. You occupy a prominent position in the world,—you shine among men; yet the day will come, perhaps, when you will be driven into obscurity, and the world will be to you, as if you had never known it. Every thing on earth is changeable; but in Heaven, all is permanent and indestructible, and the place which the predestined soul will occupy on its entering there, will be its own, for all eternity. A holy soul can neither be supplanted, nor robbed of the happiness to which God has called it. In Heaven, there is neither pain, nor solicitude, nor fear, nor care, for these have passed away, and the felicity of the holy elect is eternal and perfect.

Whatever may be the happiness of man on earth, however great it may be, it is allowed to be of the shortest duration. Death will always be powerful enough to say to the fortunate ones of this life:

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\* 1 Corinthians, ii: 9.

Your happiness will come so far and no further,—it can not extend beyond those limits,—nor beyond the time fixed by the decree of God. Your death-knell will soon ring, and the world will soon seize upon all that you possess. At your departure out of this life, you will take nothing but a winding-sheet, which will be wrapped around your body. But, in Heaven, the soul has a certainty that its happiness will never have an end. Ages may roll by, but they will never take from it one instant of its unutterable felicity. For eternity, it will enjoy the vision and possession of its God, from whom torrents of delights will flow upon it for ever. How numerous soever be the pleasures of man in this world, however multiplied his joys, he can not possess them all at once,—he can not relish them all at the same time. He may enjoy one pleasure now, and another at a future time; but let him vary them as much as ever he can, he will soon get tired and disgusted with them. It is not so with the joys of Heaven; they are continual, inexhaustible, and all enjoyed together. They pour into the souls of the elect delights ever new, yet ever the same. Satiety never approaches them, and the blessed in Heaven can at all times say: My soul superabounds with joy in the Lord, for He is my reward exceedingly great.

O holy Sion, how beautiful thou art, and how wonderful! O holy light of faith, what great things thou hast shown us, and bidden us hope for, in exchange for the deceitful pleasures of this fleeting world! O divine faith, thou hast assured us that Heaven was made for us,—that we were created for Heaven. The day, therefore, will come, when we shall take our departure from this vain and fleeting world, to enter the house of eternity, to be seated in the habitation of God, in the joy of our Lord: then we shall see God face to face, and we shall know Him, as we are known by Him; then we shall be put in possession of a happiness without end, and of delights unspeakable and eternal; then we shall be forever fixed in the kingdom of God, who is all goodness and all charity,—who created, loved and redeemed us. Behold the magnificent inheritance which Thou hast prepared for us, O divine Saviour! Such the adorable promise which Thou hast made us, and which Thou hast sealed by Thy death and by the effusion of Thy blood on the cross. But this crown of immortality which awaits us in Heaven, my Brethren, must be merited by us,—we must render ourselves worthy of it.



What then should we do to obtain it? From our earliest youth, religion placed in our hands a little book which contains an abridgment of all that it teaches; and we learned from it, that the road which leads us to Heaven, is the love of God and the observance of His holy commandments. To attain Heaven then, it is necessary to love God. Ah! my Brethren, is it so difficult a thing to love God? No; it is only necessary to have a grateful heart. You can love God; and why not love the only being who deserves to be infinitely loved, because the only one infinitely perfect? Why will you not love your Father, your brother, your most generous benefactor? He created you, and you have forgotten this blessing; instead of striking you with eternal death, when you had sinned, He did not cease to take pity upon you,—He redeemed you, and the blood which flowed from His heart on the cross, blotted out the sentence of condemnation, which sin had fixed on your forehead, and made you once more pure and spotless. He replaced you on the road to happiness, and gave you back once more His love. Oh, preserve this precious love, and give Him back yours in return: love God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with all your mind and all your strength. Remember, my Brethren, that the Holy Ghost declares that he who loves not God, is dead; for being deprived of His grace, he is dead to eternal life; while, on the contrary, he is full of life who gives to God love for love, and heart for heart. Our divine Saviour promises to come and establish His dwelling in the bosom of the man who loves Him. He dwells in me, such are His words, and I dwell in him, and he shall have eternal life.

To obtain Heaven, it is necessary to serve God and keep His commandments. If you love God sincerely, you will submit to His adorable law; you will be happy in accomplishing His divine will. It is the saying of eternal truth, my Brethren, that he who loves God will keep His commandments. The yoke of the Lord is sweet and light; it is not hard to be borne; besides, we can do all things when supported and fortified by divine grace, which is never wanting to him who asks it, from the bottom of his heart.

If you desire then to obtain Heaven, love God; if you wish to have part in the happiness of the saints, keep the commandments,—be faithful. But we are so weak! How often have we resolved to walk in the way of the commandments, and how often have we



forgotten our resolutions and offended the Lord! Nevertheless, He himself has said, that nothing defiled shall ever enter the kingdom of Heaven. Yes, my Brethren, God has spoken this awful word, but He has added, that He will not reject the humble and contrite of heart: "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." He has even said that He is the bread of life, that gives strength and the grace of perseverance. Come, therefore, with contrition, but with confidence also, to the feet of your humble Saviour, in the tribunal of His mercy, and your sins will be forgiven. Come with eagerness, with ardor, with love, to the holy table, where God himself will be your food; and by the aid of this living bread, and joining with it the holy exercise of prayer, which obtains every thing from the goodness of the celestial Father, you will become firm, unshaken in the holy ways of the saints; you will advance even to the mountain of the Lord, you will be elevated even to Heaven, and God will be your reward exceedingly great for all eternity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XVIII.

### SEVENTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### GENERAL JUDGMENT.

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"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."—2 CORINTHIANS, v: 10.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven: seated at the right hand of God, the Father, He took possession of the glory which He had merited by His sufferings and His painful death on the cross! He went to prepare our place in the abode of happiness, and to be our advocate with God, His Father, before whom He perpetually intercedes in our favor. Hence

the angels said to the Apostles, it will be from the right hand of God the Father, that Jesus will return to the earth, at the end of time, to judge the living and the dead. It is this second coming of our Saviour that I will speak about to-day, in explaining the seventh article of our creed.

What do the words of the seventh article of the creed signify? "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead?" They signify that we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Supreme Judge; that we believe He will come again on earth at the end of time; that on the last day of the world, He will descend from the highest heavens to judge all men, and render to each one according to his works. It is true, my Brethren, as our faith teaches us, that immediately after death, we will each undergo a particular judgment before God, and that our doom from that time will be fixed forever, according to the works we have done during life; but see, the soul, at this moment, stands alone in the presence of its God; upon it alone the sentence of the sovereign Judge is pronounced; there is none but is to be then rewarded or punished. Therefore, is it, that there will be a second Judgment, so that all humanity may appear before the tribunal of God, to be rewarded or punished both in soul and body. It is in fact but just, that the body should have in eternity, the same doom as the soul to which it had been united in time, as it had served as the instrument of the soul, and coöperated with it in good and evil doing during its pilgrimage in this world.

This general and universal Judgment will be preceded by terrible events, as the Holy Scriptures have foretold many ages ago. All the elements will be in frightful confusion; dreadful signs will be seen in the heavens, and on earth, which will be shaken even to its very foundation. In many places it will open, and yawning abysses will appear. The sea will be in fearful agitation,—threatening the earth, and seeming to engulf it beneath its waves.

The sun will lose its brightness, and darkness will cover its face; the moon and the stars will seem to fall from the heavens; a subterraneous fire will burst out in numberless places, and every living thing will be consumed and reduced to ashes.

These terrible events being accomplished, and the world's agony being by them announced, behold the angel of the Lord, in a strong

and powerful voice which shall awaken the dead moldering in their graves, and summon them before the tribunal of God, is heard crying out: "Arise ye dead, and come to Judgment." In an instant, from the east to the west, from the north to the south, rise from the corruption of the tomb all the generations of men that have lived on the earth from the commencement of time till the last day, and the power of God will transport them into the valley of Judgment. But what a difference between these resuscitated bodies. The just will arise, and their bodies will appear brilliant, glorious and radiant. The reprobate will also arise, but how deformed, and how hideous! Ah! all the shame and all the deformity of sin will cover their bodies, and render them most frightful and most disgusting. Great and sweet will be the joy which will replenish the souls of the just, when they shall behold their bodies so magnificently glorified for the part they took in the good works performed by these holy souls while they were inclosed in the prison of their mortal flesh! But how terrible will be the grief of the reprobate; how horrible the despair of these lost souls, when they shall be forced once more to unite with their hideous bodies, together to undergo their eternal punishment in the fire kindled by the justice of an insulted God!

Behold, therefore, all mankind assembled in the valley of Josaphat: heaven opens, and Jesus, the Saviour appears on a brilliant cloud, full of glory and majesty, invested with sovereign power. Millions of bright angels surround His throne, while some precede Him, bearing aloft the cross, the sacred emblem of our redemption, upon which our sins were expiated; that cross, whence pardon descended upon the world abundantly sufficient for all, but of which, alas! all would not profit. Then a strict examination of conscience takes place, which can not last long before the eyes of a God who has seen every thing, and can make every thing manifest in the twinkling of an eye. As if in an immense mirror, at one glance are seen all the crimes and all the good deeds of this innumerable multitude. Each of the assembled multitude of men sees every thing in himself and in all others. Then the angels commence the separation of the good from the bad,—of the living from the dead.

On the right they set the living, that is to say, the just, who lived



the life of grace and holiness; on the left, the dead, sinners who are dead to grace and happiness. Alas, what a sad separation,—how painfully it strikes upon the heart! The husband torn from the wife,—one placed on the right, the other on the left; the father and the mother called to happiness, and their children condemned; the brother chosen, the sister rejected; friends that during life were inseparable, now become, one a glorious saint, the other a hideous demon. The poor slave and the servant, the laborer and the mechanic, despised during their mortal lives, now take their seats on the right, while their powerful oppressors, the rich, the proud, the avaricious and sordid masters groan in sorrow on the left! With shame on their foreheads, pain in their souls, and despair in their hearts, they utter the mournful cry: O ye mountains, fall upon us! crush us, bury us; wrest us from this sorrow which consumes us, from this remorse which devours us. “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.\* How hideous thou art, O sin! O misery, how terrible!

At last, our divine Redeemer turns toward the just, and from his lips flow forth the delightful words: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” and which your virtuous and prudent life has merited. It is no longer to the cross and to sufferings that I call you; it is not now to struggles and to contests that I invite you; I come to establish you in sovereign repose; I call you to the delights of heaven; you shall enjoy happiness, and this happiness shall never have an end; I wish to be no longer separated from you, and you shall be with me for everlasting ages.

The eyes of the sovereign Judge are now cast on the reprobate, and strikes them with terror. The anathema issues from His mouth: “Depart from me, ye cursed,” depart “into everlasting fire.” During life I offered you powerful means of salvation; and you have despised them. How often, by the mouths of my preachers and confessors, have I exhorted you to be converted, and do penance,—and you would not heed me. How many examples of virtue and piety did I set before you in the lives of my saints, and you would not follow them! Where are your good works! You

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\* Hebrew, x: 31.



knew they were required of you,—yet I see only vices, disorders and crimes! I asked the love of your hearts, and you have given me only coldness, indifference and contempt! I asked from you charity for your brethren, whom I identified with myself, and commanded you to do unto them as you would do unto me; and for them and for me you have had no charity; you had only selfishness, hard-heartedness and avarice! “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” The earth opens, and flames burst forth from the chasm,—headlong the reprobate tumble into hell, thrust in by the hands of demons, to begin their eternal sorrow. In hell there is no grace,—there, redemption is no more possible; the sufferings of the damned will never have an end; time will never bring them consolation, for time is now no more, and the clock of hell points to no hour,—its dial is encircled with the word *Eternity!*

On the right of the supreme Judge, a song of triumph is heard: Glory and honor to our bountiful and powerful God, whom we have loved and served! Glory and honor to the Lamb that was slain, and who possessed all our love! Holy, holy, holy, the God of heaven and earth, to whom be all glory and all honor, forever and forever. The elect move in a band toward the eternal mansions: they follow Jesus into glory, as they had followed Him in virtue and in bearing the cross. The gates of paradise are thrown open, the glory of heaven encompasses the children of God, and ineffable delights fill their hearts with ecstatic bliss! They shall be happy forever! An angel closes the gates of heaven, and fixes upon them the seal of God, which shall never be broken;—eternity reigns all around.

Every time I think of this terrible day, says St. Jerome, I tremble in every part of my body. Whether I eat, whether I drink, whatever I do, it seems I always hear the awful sound of the trumpet, which rings in my ears, and says: “Arise ye dead, and come to Judgment.” A holy man remained for three days before his death in a state of stupor and profound grief. Some one asked: Where are you going? He answered; to Judgment. Why should you fear? Alas! said he, how different are the Judgments of God from those of man! My Brethren, if that hour should come to you to-day, what would be your lot? Where would your consciences place you? Would it be on the right, or would it be on the left? Choose now,

determine your place, for at present it depends on yourselves. A life of sin and vice will place you among the reprobate,—a life of virtue and wisdom will lead you to the right of Christ, on the road to heaven,—to the happiness of paradise! Oh, take then, I entreat you, the road to glory.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XIX.

### EIGHTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### THE HOLY GHOST.

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“I believe in the Holy Ghost.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

You know God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; you know also Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our loving Saviour; and you know that, to redeem us, He was made man, was scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the tree of the cross, upon which He shed even the last drop of his blood. You have already learned all this, my Brethren, and you have also learned from your holy religion, that our divine Redeemer triumphed over death; that He rose again, and that He is full of glory and majesty in heaven, where He intercedes for us, with His Father; where He prepares for us a place, and whither He will introduce us when the time known to himself and decreed by God shall come. I will continue to instruct you in the great and consoling mysteries which faith teaches. That which is the object of the eighth article of the creed is no less interesting than those you have already learned.

What is the Holy Ghost? There are three persons in the most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, whom the divine Saviour, when He ascended into heaven, promised to send to his Apostles, is the third person of the adorable Trinity. This Spirit of truth has no beginning, and He shall never have an end. The Father, the first person of the most Blessed

Trinity, has no principle that produces Him, He exists of himself. The Son, the second person of the most Blessed Trinity, has no principle but the Father, by whom He was begotten in an unspeakable manner, from all eternity. The Holy Ghost, the third person of the most Blessed Trinity, proceeds, from all eternity, from the Father and the Son, as from one and the same principle, without being begotten of either the one or the other. The Father, contemplating himself and knowing himself, begets another self,—a Son, called also the Word; that is what is meant by the *eternal generation of the Word*. The Father and the Son, by their reciprocal love, produce the Holy Ghost, the term of their love, the indissoluble bond between them; that is what is called the *procession of the Holy Ghost*, that is to say, the eternal production of the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who has with them one and the same substance, and who is God, like God the Father, and like God the Son, and equal to them in all things. This is a truth which Jesus Christ clearly expressed, when He commanded his Apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is God, for He is comprised under the same name with the Father, who is God, and with the Son, who is God, and He operates in the work of our regeneration, in the same manner as the Father, who is God, and as the Son, who is God. The Holy Ghost is God, for the Evangelist positively declares Him to be so. “There are three that give testimony in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”\* Yes, the Holy Ghost is God, as the Father and the Son; He has the same nature, the same divine essence, and at the name of the Holy Ghost, as at the name of the Father, and at the name of the Son, every head must bow, and every knee must bend, in heaven, on earth, and even in hell.

But the Father and the Son are also of a nature infinitely spiritual, and infinitely holy; why, therefore, is the name Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, which signifies the same thing, given neither to the Father nor to the Son? It is because both the one and the other are already known by names respectively proper to each,—the one

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\* 1 Epistle St. John, v: 7.



by the name of Father, the other by the name of Son; but as we know no name which suits the third person better than that of the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, we designate Him by this name, to distinguish Him from the Father and the Son. Again, we give Him this name, because the Holy Ghost is as the Spirit, the Soul of our soul, that is to say, He vivifies it;—for the Lord says: I will “put my Spirit in you, and you shall live.”\* In fine, we give Him this name, because the Holy Ghost is the author of our sanctification; because all the blessings and all the graces which we have received from God, we possess from the liberality of the Holy Ghost, whom we ought to thank with all our hearts in grateful acknowledgment. It was the Holy Ghost, who, in baptism, washed us, sanctified us, and justified us. My Brethren, what were we before the saving waters of baptism were poured upon our heads? Alas! we had received from our parents a sad inheritance! From the very first instant of our existence, sin came to soil our souls; we were conceived in iniquity, and were born children of wrath, unworthy of heaven. Be Thou praised, O Holy Ghost, for the graces which Thou hast granted us in baptism! Thou hast wrested us from eternal death, raised us up to life again, delivered us from the shameful bondage of the devil, regenerated us, made us children of God, heirs of heaven, of happiness without end! Be praised, O Thou Spirit of love and of unspeakable charity, for, not content with placing us, by baptism, on the holy way that leads to heaven, Thou hast not ceased to dwell in our souls and hearts, to enlighten and direct us in all our conduct, to animate us with Thy celestial warmth, to show us the dangers which beset us, and aid us in avoiding them, to make known to us our enemies and help us to combat and conquer them. Yes, O Divine Spirit, my heart delights to repeat it; it is to Thee, to Thy grace, to Thy assistance and to Thy divine lights, that I am indebted for every blessing, and for every good deed I ever had the happiness to perform. There is no doubt, my Brethren, the Holy Ghost labors incessantly to keep us in, or bring us back to the pathway of virtue, to render us better and more holy. To Him, as to their source, we must attribute all the virtues which adorn and enrich our souls. It is His grace which makes virtue known to us,

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\* Ezechiel, xxxvii: 14.

and which moves and excites our will to choose and put in execution the good it reveals to our understanding. You read a good book: it is the Holy Ghost who produces and keeps in you the good desire, the salutary will to follow the wise counsel which this good book gives you; to rise out of sin, to be converted, and to devote your heart to the practice of the holy precepts of the law of God. You hear a sermon: it is the Holy Ghost who imprints on your soul the truths which the sensible word of the minister of Jesus Christ exposed only to the eyes of your mind, and who works upon your heart and fills it with holy thoughts and Christian sentiments. Your attention is directed to a wise and virtuous person, to a pious and zealous Christian. The purity that embellishes his soul, and the peace which reigns in his heart, sweet recompense for the practice of his duties, are manifested by the calmness and serenity of his countenance. You feel sweetly inclined to walk in his footsteps, to imitate his amiable conduct; it is the Holy Ghost who gives you this attraction for virtue; He it is who directs your eyes to the beautiful model which He presents to you, and He it is who inspires you with the resolution of following this model in the ways of the Lord. Death strikes down by your side the friend of your bosom, one near and dear to your heart, and behold, you begin to reflect on the shortness of life, on the nothingness of the things of this world, and you think more seriously of death and of eternity; it is the Holy Ghost speaking to your soul; He desires to enter it,—to convert and lead it to heaven, and He knocks at the door of your heart. Open your heart, my dear brother; listen to these good thoughts, give way to these divine inspirations; the Spirit of God brings you light, peace and happiness. You fall sick, and on your bed of suffering your conscience is aroused from its torpor; you begin to heed its reproaches; you pray and are converted: give thanks to the Holy Ghost, for it is He who spoke to you, who touched and enlightened you; and because you have heard the voice of God, and have not hardened your heart, behold, you arise from your sins, and you enter into the joy of your Lord, to whom you have become again the child of benediction. Yes, my Brethren, our sanctification will be effected, our salvation will be secured, if we always lend an attentive ear to the voice of the Holy Ghost, and if we faithfully obey His charitable inspirations. But beware, my

Brethren, beware of opposing Him by manifesting a hard and obstinate heart: let us not compel this Spirit of goodness to withdraw His divine light from us, let us not cause Him to retire and totally forsake us. Woe to the obstinate sinner whom the Holy Ghost abandons to a reprobate sense. From the moment the unfortunate sinner ceases to see the enormity of his sin, he swallows iniquity like water, he rejects far from him the very idea of repentance, he becomes daily more and more hardened, he dies at last, and his soul, overtaken by the vengeance of God, goes to suffer forever in hell, the torments of the damned.

Divine Spirit, we adore Thee from the bottom of our hearts, for Thou art God; we believe firmly that Thou art the third person of the most Holy Trinity, that Thou proceedest from the Father and the Son, and like them, Thou art eternal, all-powerful, infinite in all Thy perfections, Creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. Ah! deign to enlighten our understanding, and replenish our minds with holy desires; encompass our hearts and sanctify them. Come, O Spirit of wisdom and of knowledge, of counsel and of fortitude, of understanding, of piety and of the fear of the Lord; come, O Holy Ghost, establish Thy habitation in our souls, that under Thy guidance, we may know God, love God, serve God, and walk all the days of our life in the way of His commandments, along the path of virtue, the only road which leads to the happiness of heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XX.

### NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

## THE CHURCH.

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“I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

My Brethren, there is a God, the beginning, the source, and the author of every being. He exists necessarily, He exists of himself; He is eternal, He is infinitely perfect. His providence rules and



governs all things with power and sweetness, and heaven and earth march in the paths He has marked out for them. In God, there are three persons : the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These adorable persons have all the same nature and divine essence. The Father has no principle to produce Him ; the Son proceeds from the Father by way of generation, and was begotten from all eternity ; the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and Son by way of love, and from all eternity. We would have been forever lost, but our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, died for us on the cross. He rose again, ascended into heaven, where, seated at the right hand of God his Father, He serves as our advocate, and perpetually intercedes in our behalf. On the last day of the world, He will come again on earth to judge the living and the dead. Behold, in a few words, my Brethren, the great truths which I have unfolded in my preceding instructions. We have now come to the ninth article of the creed, which is thus expressed : *The Holy Catholic Church*. The explanation of this article of our faith interests us in the highest degree, since it is by the Church of Jesus Christ that we must be conducted to heaven. Continue then to give me your attention.

To please God and attain heaven, it is necessary for us to live in the true faith of Jesus Christ. We should then have a certainty that we are on the right road,—marching according to the true doctrine of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Our Lord must have given us means of ascertaining this road beyond doubt, and this means must be so plain as to be within the reach and comprehension of every man, learned or unlearned. What then is this means ?

Is it the private study of the Holy Scriptures ? No ; for there are an immense number of men who have neither the time nor the capacity necessary to devote themselves to deep study, and to make such laborious, yet indispensable researches. Beside, how vast is the number of those who have never learned to read. Is it, perhaps, the teaching of the learned ? No : neither will this answer the purpose. For every man, left to his own opinions, makes a system for himself ; and, in every sect, the most learned men differ very much from each other, even on the most essential articles of the faith and doctrine of Jesus Christ ; they differ, that is certain ; they can not therefore be right. Which then is to be followed ?

Is it possible that the ignorant, illiterate man will be able to make a choice? No. The teaching of the learned is, therefore, not the means that can disclose to us the way to truth.

Does it then consist in the immediate and particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost? No, my Brethren, that is not the means. See what takes place among sectarists who pretend to have this miraculous and immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can teach nothing but truth; He can not teach error; yes and no at the same time. But we know that all the sects disagree among themselves, and create for themselves contradictory creeds? It is not then the Spirit of truth, but the father of lies that leads them.

Who then will shed upon us the light of divine truth? What means have we of knowing the faith and the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Turn your eyes to the Church established by our Saviour, the God of truth; it is the sure guide to whom our Saviour has confided us. But, without doubt, a church that could be deceived, would not be the proper instrument to instruct us in faith and true doctrine. No, such could not be the Church which our divine Saviour established on earth. His Church is "like a city built upon a rock," it is firmly founded on truth, and we can with the utmost reliance assert that the Church of Jesus Christ is not subject to error.

A little later I will show you this truth confirmed by the express words of the Sacred Scriptures, but let us first see what is this holy Church of Jesus Christ. When the Apostles began to preach the Gospel of the Saviour among those who wished to follow its doctrine, there were some who received and embraced every thing these faithful ambassadors of God taught them. These were the true believers. Others again made choice of some truths and rejected others. These were the heretics. As soon as the Apostles discovered the culpable manner in which these men acted, they imposed upon them the obligation of renouncing their errors; and drove them from their communion, if they remained obstinate. They received into the society or assembly of Christians, which formed the Church of Christ, only true believers,—those who received and embraced all the doctrine which had been taught to them.

Our Saviour wished not that all His ministers should be equal

and occupy the same rank in His Church. He chose some to be superiors,—some to be elevated to the highest places,—these were bishops; others were to occupy a lower rank,—these were principally priests, whose duty it is to assist the bishops. This distinction is manifest in the selection which the Saviour made of His Apostles, who were most certainly the first bishops. He afterward chose seventy-two disciples, whom he sent to preach His Gospel, but without investing them with the authority which He had bestowed upon the Apostles.

But, had all the bishops the same authority and the same dignity? No; our Saviour wished that one of them should be placed above all the rest, that he should be invested with supreme power, that he should be His representative, His vicar on earth, the visible head, the sovereign pontiff, the pastor of pastors in His Church. It was on St. Peter that God, our Saviour bestowed this distinction and high dignity. He had promised him this privilege before He died on the cross, when he said to him: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.\* He fulfilled His promise when He said to the same Apostle: “Feed my lambs,” that is to say, the faithful; “feed my sheep,” that is to say, the pastors; be you the pastor of pastors.

What then is the Church, in which the true faith of Jesus Christ resides? It is the society of all faithful Christians united together by one and the same profession of faith, by the participation of the same sacraments, and by submission to the same legitimate pastors, chiefly to the sovereign pontiff, who is the Pope. This Church will subsist to the very end of time, and until then, will continue to conduct mankind in the ways of truth and of holiness. If it were possible for it to fall into error it would have long since have sunk into ruin; it would long since have ceased to be the assembly of the faithful,—of true believers. But this our divine Lord would never permit;—hence He was pleased to endow His Church with the divine prerogative of infallibility, in every thing regarding faith, morals and salvation. No, the Church can not err, for our Saviour has said to the prince of the Apostles: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not

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\* St. Matthew, xvi: 18.



prevail against it;\* that is to say, all the power and strength of the devil and his assistants shall never lead it into error. But they would have prevailed against it, had it been permitted the father of lies to draw it away from truth. From that moment it would cease to be the society of the faithful, it would be no more the Church of Jesus Christ.

No, the Church can not err, for Christ has said: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."† He will be with His Church, not from time to time, but all days; not for a certain time, but even to the end of the world. God is with it; He leads it as if by the hand; it can never therefore fall into errors and illusions.

No, the Church can not err, for the Saviour has said to his Apostles and their lawful successors: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever. . . . The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you."‡ The Holy Ghost shall remain forever with the Apostles on earth, He will be with them even to the end of time; but the Apostles were to live only a short time on earth; it is therefore with their successors, with the sovereign pontiff and with the bishops that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, who will teach them all truth, will abide forever. It is therefore impossible that the Church should ever fall into error, for the Holy Ghost is here always present for the purpose of enlightening, teaching and guiding it. If you doubt this truth; that the Church is infallible, that she can not be deceived in things which regard faith and salvation, one of these two things, my Brethren, must follow: either you refuse to believe the word of your Saviour, and then you declare yourself an unbeliever; or, you charge Him with having failed in His promise, and then you insult, you outrage God, you are a blasphemer. Yes, Jesus Christ has promised that His presence, and that of the Holy Ghost, will perpetually preserve His Church from the slightest taint of error. It will possess the truth, all the truth; such the crown our Saviour has given His Spouse, which shall never be torn from her brow.

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\* St. Matthew, xvi: 18, 19. † St. Matthew, xxviii: 20. ‡ St. John, xiv: 16, 26.

Hence, St. Paul calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth."\* Whosoever clings to this pillar shall never fall into error, and true faith shall forever be his happy portion.

My Brethren, give daily thanks to God, for having received from Him,—from His bounty, the precious gift of faith. You were born, nourished, and reared in the true Church of Jesus Christ: Oh! listen with docility to its teachings, and love them dearly. They are not doctrines deceitfully built on the whimsical reason of man, they are divine teachings, they are the doctrines of Jesus Christ himself, who imparts them to you, through the teaching body, whom the Saviour of the world has appointed, and whom the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, directs, enlightens and preserves. Yes, my Brethren, let us constantly cling to this unshaken pillar, let us open our minds to the truths which our holy mother, the Church, makes known to us, and our hearts to the precepts which she in God's name imposes on us, to the end, that having followed the truth and done well, we may reach heaven, where we will see God, face to face, such as He is, and where that God of goodness will make us infinitely happy.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXI.

### NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### MARKS OF THE CHURCH.

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"I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church."—NICENE CREED.

THE prophet Isaias, speaking of the Church, compares it to an immense city built upon the summit of a lofty mountain, exposed to the view of all people, and in which the truth perpetually dwells. The Church must always be visible, so that the people may know it and distinguish it from all the sects which arrogate to themselves

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\* 1 Timothy, iii: 15.

the name of Church of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Church is the only fold opened to the nations of the earth by the Saviour, and it is in it alone that the means of attaining salvation can be found. Jesus Christ alone can lead us to heaven, and He dwells only in that Church which He himself established; there alone He teaches, there He instructs, there He bestows His graces, and there alone does He communicate His spirit. Hence He willed that this Church, His true spouse, should be adorned with certain shining marks, which distinguish it from all others in the world, and which none of the sects can either claim or counterfeit. These marks, by which we recognize the true Church, are those of truth itself: *Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity*,—sacred marks, which the Lord has granted only to the *One, Holy, Roman Catholic Church*, as you will soon be convinced.

Truth is essentially *one*, for God is *one*, and God reveals the truth to men. Our Saviour thus besought his heavenly Father: "I pray for those who through their word shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me; . . . that they may be one, as we also are one."\* Jesus Christ, therefore, prayed that the Church which He came to establish in the world might be *One*; He required that it should be a fold, having but *one shepherd*; a house, wherein all should be subject to only *one head*; a body, all of whose members should be perfectly united. Thus the true Church must be *one*; *one* in its faith, *one* in its laws, *one* in its hopes, *one* in its head. Such, my Brethren, is the Roman Catholic Church; it is to it, and to it alone, that unity belongs.

It is one in its faith. Although spread all over the earth, it preserves the apostolic faith with a wonderful zeal, as if it dwelt but in one single mansion. The languages of the world are different, but the faith of Catholics is everywhere the same. Such as it is to-day and here, such has it been everywhere and always. Summon from the grave a Catholic from every country, and in every one of the eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since the establishment of the Church; ask of all these Catholics who lived without knowing each other, without seeing each other,—some of whom

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\* St. John, xvii : 20, 21, 22.



died a hundred years, some a thousand years ago, some since the beginning of the nineteenth century,—ask them what is their faith and their belief, and they will all rehearse for you the creed which the Church still teaches every day to her children; they will all repeat for you the same dogmas, the same truths, the same points of doctrine which the Church still unfolds to you to-day through the ministry of its pastors. Yes, the Catholic Church is one in faith, and it never has varied, because truth is immutable and knows no change.

The Roman Catholic Church is *one* in its communion and in its ministry. All her children are subject to the same authority and participate in the same sacraments, the same sacrifice, the same prayers, the same worship. To maintain this divine communion, Jesus Christ instituted a ministry, spread over every part of His Church, the same everywhere, and forming as it were a chain which binds the earth to heaven,—to Jesus,—to God.

Thus, in every diocese there is a bishop, having as assistants priests, and other clergy of inferior ranks, and at the head of all the bishops, there is a supreme pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ for the whole world. The priest is in communion with his bishop, the bishop with the sovereign pontiff; the sovereign pontiff is subject to Jesus Christ, who unites all to God, His Father. Behold the links of the wonderful and divine chain: the priest, the bishop, the Pope, Jesus Christ,—God; so that the Christian who obeys his pastor and hears him, obeys Jesus Christ himself,—hears God himself; all are united with each other and united with God. It is not thus with the sects separated from the Church. Among them there is no unity of faith. You find there only changes and contradictions; every day introduces new creeds,—new professions of faith. It can not be otherwise, since every man has the right of framing his religion to suit himself, or his conception of right. Thus, to speak only of Protestantism, we do not hesitate to assert, that we can count their sects by hundreds. No; among them there can not be truth,—for among them exists no unity.

The Church of Jesus Christ must be *Holy*. It must be holy in its head, in its maxims, in its doctrine, in its sacraments, in its precepts, in the end which it proposes to attain, and also in its members; and this holiness must be made sensible so that all, learned and unlearned, may recognize it as the Church of the God of holi-

ness. Hence, it was to bestow upon His Church all sanctity that Christ died; "that He might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."\*

Such is the Roman Catholic Church. It is *holy* in its head, who is Jesus Christ; *holy* in the doctrine which it teaches and in the rules which it prescribes; *holy* in its sacraments and in all the practices which it has instituted and approved, and at which sectarians cavil only because they know neither their salutary influence, nor the aim and spirit which dictated them. It is *holy* in its members, among whom are found and always will be found true saints, whose sanctity is evinced by their miracles. The Catholic Church, therefore, is *holy*, and it alone can claim this title.

None of the sects separated from the Church can be called *holy*, for none of them have Jesus Christ or the Apostles for their founder and their head. They are all the sad offsprings of proud minds and corrupt hearts. Arius, Luther and Calvin were haughty, scandalous and wanton apostates, whom God and His divine Son could never have chosen to reform His Church.

The *true* Church must be *Catholic*, that is to say, *universal*. Truth is one; it is, therefore, the same at all times and in every country. In fact, what is true *here* must be true *everywhere*; what is true to-day will not be false to-morrow, nor ever. Now, the Church is the *truth* revealed to the world; it must therefore be *Catholic* or *universal*, for all time,—for all places,—for truth must be everywhere and always the same.

Such is the Roman Catholic Church. It is *Catholic* or *universal* as to the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Such it received them, eighteen hundred years ago, from the lips of the Apostles, such has it preserved them until now, such does it teach them at present. Nothing has been added,—not one *iota* has been suppressed, and it has ever driven from its fold all who were disposed to introduce innovations.

It is *Catholic* or *universal* as to time. The Church commenced with the beginning of the world. The truths which it teaches us to-day, were revealed to our first parents, transmitted by the Patriarchs, unfolded in the law of Moses, completed by the Gospel of

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\* Ephesians, v: 27.

Jesus Christ, intrusted to the Apostles, and propagated by them and their successors throughout the whole universe. These same truths, pure and undefiled, will be preached to the very consummation of ages, for the Church will last as long as the world, and its creed will be the creed of mankind throughout all time.

It is Catholic or universal as to place. God chose, says St. Augustine, that the Church of Jesus Christ should not be limited like earthly kingdoms or heretical sects, which are confined to a province or a kingdom. The Catholic Church invites all mankind to enter its fold. It is extended over the whole earth,—it includes all nations; from one end of the world to the other it displays the splendor of an united faith,—the beauty of an unvarying doctrine; and everywhere, and at every hour, Christians repeat its divine creed, and priests offer up its adorable sacrifice.

It is not so with the sects cut off from the Catholic Church,—none of these are Catholic; they dare not even take the name. God willed that it should be given only to the true spouse of Jesus Christ,—the Roman Catholic Church. No, these sects are not Catholic; they do not teach all the doctrine of Jesus Christ; we know the limits within which they are confined, and we know the time when they were ushered into existence.

The true Church is *Apostolic*. It was to the Apostles that our Saviour intrusted the sacred deposit of truths which were revealed for the salvation of the world. It was the Apostles whom He charged to announce those truths to the whole universe; the true Church therefore, must descend,—must come from the Apostles; the Holy Ghost, moreover, declares that the Apostles are pillars of the Church.

Such is the Roman Catholic Church. It is *Apostolic*: the Apostles founded it,—imbued it with their doctrine,—were its first pastors; and their lawful successors govern it to-day. We can trace back the succession of our bishops, from the present time to the days of the Apostles. In the See of Rome is seated the legitimate successor of the first Pope. Beginning with Pius IX, the reigning head of the Church, we can ascend the course of ages through an uninterrupted succession of sovereign pontiffs to St. Peter,—even to Jesus Christ himself. The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, is *Apostolic*,—the Church of Jesus Christ,—the Church of the Apostles,—the Church of God,—the only true Church.



Such are not the heretical sects. Supported by historical truths, we have the right of asking them : Who are you ? How long have you had existence ? Four hundred years ago you were not known ; you did not come from the Apostles ; we know your founders,—you are of yesterday,—you are not Apostolic,—you are not the Church of Jesus Christ.

But there is yet another mark by which we can easily recognize the true Church ; it is that which our divine Lord himself pointed out to His disciples, when in His discourse to them after the last supper, He told them, that as the world had persecuted Him, so would it also persecute them. Look then for that religious society,—for that Church, against which all others have sworn an implacable hatred,—which the world pursues with taunts and calumnies ; for the Church, which “*is placed as a sign that must suffer contradiction,*” that, like its divine Founder, bears upon its brow a crown of thorns,—a diadem of sorrows ; and in it recognize the Church of Jesus Christ. But which is that Church ? Ah, my Brethren, you all know it. You know that it is none other than the Roman Catholic Church. At all times, and in every land, has the sword of persecution been directed against the bosom of this Church ; at all times have its members been a mark for the malignant oppression of the world. It alone is a persecuted Church,—it is a struggling Church, ever engaged in fighting the world and its wickedness. It alone, therefore, is the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Yes, my Catholic Friends, such is the true Church,—that Church which has been established by the Saviour of the world,—propagated by the Apostles,—cemented by the blood of martyrs,—the Roman Catholic Church,—the only Church which is truly One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

In it the Lord has deposited the treasure of truths which He has revealed to the world,—that precious treasure of graces which sanctify our souls, work out our salvation, and conduct us to heaven. In it we see the true fold ; the only one recognized by the Supreme Pastor seated at the right hand of His heavenly Father. In it we find that faithful flock, whom the good shepherd loves, and whom He confides to the care of those whom, on earth, He had invested with His divine authority. O ! my divine Saviour ! we bless Thee from the bottom of our hearts, and all the days of our

lives, for the unspeakable bounty which has made choice of us, among so many nations which even yet sit in the shades of darkness and the shadow of death. Thanks be to Thee, O my God, for having granted us the happiness of being born in the bosom of Thy Church, which has brought us up with so much care and tenderness, which nourishes us so abundantly with the bread of truth that it alone possesses, and with the manna of graces which it alone can obtain for us, and by which we are enabled to do Thy holy will! Yes, we shall forever love this holy Church,—Thy faithful spouse; we will hear and obey its voice, for we wish to please Thee on earth to the end, that we may deserve to see, love, and bless Thee in a happy eternity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXII.

NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

### RULE OF FAITH.

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“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.”—GALATIANS, i : 8.

THE Son of God came and dwelt among men,—was made flesh, and died on the cross to redeem us from sin, that He might sanctify us by the truth, that He might form for himself a church without spot or wrinkle, and in which He deposited the precious treasure of heavenly doctrine, received from the bosom of His Father. He wished that there should be but one flock and one shepherd, with whom we should all be intimately united, in the unity of Faith. Thus He speaks to us by the mouth of His Apostle : “I beseech you, brethren, that you be united in one Faith; that you be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let there be no schisms and heresies among you; let there be among you all but one and the same doctrine, for there is but one God, one Faith, one

baptism.”\* To be saved, then, to arrive at the happiness which God has destined for His faithful flock, we must then be established in this unity of Faith, we must be sanctified by the truth which has come from heaven. We can not too often repeat what we can not too deeply learn: permit me then, my Brethren, once more, to tell you where you will find this sanctifying truth,—this saving Faith.

“He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.”† Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. . . . One God, one Faith, one baptism.” You know these divine oracles proceed from the mouth of God himself, you know that they alone walk in the road to heaven, who live in the Faith and are in the possession of the doctrine which our divine Saviour revealed to the world. But, my Brethren, did the Son of God intrust to each one of us in particular the sacred deposit of truth? If it were so, truth would soon cease to rule, or even be known on the earth; religion, the offspring of heaven, and which must be immutable, because it is true, because it is from God, would soon become the sad sport of human opinions; it would every day undergo new changes, and perpetually vary according to the fickle notions of men; it would cease to be, and there soon would remain not one stone upon another of that magnificent edifice, raised by the hand of God, cemented by the blood of Jesus, and built upon the foundation of the Apostles, hell would prevail against the Almighty, and the darkness of error would again overspread the earth. Were man the judge of his Faith, he would do what he has always done, and what he is doing this very day. For, is there an article of our Faith, a truth of the religion of Jesus Christ, which he has not called in question, attacked and denied? Is there an absurdity, no matter how shameful, no matter how disgraceful, which he has not defended and endeavored to substantiate in place of the truths which God himself has deigned to reveal to the world? No, no, it is not true,—that every man is permitted to decide by his own private judgment what he should believe or what he should not believe; it is not true that the divine religion of the Son of God has been

\* Ephesians and Philippians.

† St. Mark, xvi: 16.



abandoned to the vacillating fancies of the human mind, and that we are reduced to the sad necessity of seeking the truth from the confused jargon of opinions which we see hatched every day. Where, therefore, is the truth? Who will tell us what we must believe? We need not seek it in the dark pages of your works, ye philosophers, who will believe only your reason, and follow no light but that of your understanding. Give back to the religion of Jesus Christ, restore to the Son of God the truths which you have borrowed from Him, and what would your much boasted writings contain? Few, very few truths, but an immense mass of errors. Have you more depth of genius and more brilliancy of intellect than the great philosophers of antiquity had? No: surely not. Like them then, were you thrown back on your own resources, you would grope along in the dark, you would build systems of religion and morality which would not survive a single day,—systems which the slightest blast would overturn and destroy, and you are therefore, one and all convicted of folly. In vain do you seek to impose your laws and your doctrines upon us; we will ever answer you in the words of one of your class, who here, however, fell upon the truth: “Philosophers, your laws and morals are sublime; . . . but, where is their sanction?” You can show none; your laws, therefore, have no binding obligation. Therefore, we refuse to hear and follow you, for we know well your system consists only of doubts,—leads only to the denial of all truth. Who, therefore, will tell us what we must believe and what we must do?

The heretic answers me: God himself has assumed the care of instructing us; we have the Holy Scriptures: go, read them; the Bible is the word of God. Yes, no doubt, the Holy Scriptures are the word of God, a sacred deposit of divine truths, a code of morality; but I open the Bible, and I do not understand everything I read there, and I hear even an Apostle, St. Peter, telling me that there are many things in the Scriptures which are difficult to be understood. What must I do then? Must I open and investigate your numerous commentaries, your voluminous expositions of the Bible? The mystery, no doubt, will be there revealed to me, and the unity of doctrine and of faith, which our divine Saviour recommended to us, set forth in all its beauty. Is this so? What do I really find among you? How many conflicting judg-

ments ! how many contrary ideas, now many contradictory opinions ! what confusion ! what endless wrangling ! Forsooth, you all read the Bible, and you, Lutheran,—you adore Jesus Christ,—you believe that He is God ; and you, Socinian, you do not believe it. You, Primitive Lutheran, you believe that the Bible teaches the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist ; but the Calvinist, who also reads the Bible, charges you with error and anathematizes you. You believe in the mysteries, and accept as unquestionable the miracles of our Lord ;—but here comes the Rationalist who, for his part, can see in the Scriptures nothing but myths and allegories. You acknowledge the utility, and perhaps the necessity of good works ; thereby contradicting your founders, who declared good works to be useless, and even hurtful to salvation. “The Bible, you exclaim, “and nothing but the Bible ;” but, be kind enough to point out to me in the Gospel, what is of faith,—what binds under precept,—and what is merely of counsel. You can not do it. No, no ; yours is not the way to learn what we must believe and what we must practice,—to learn, in a word, that religion by which we can save our souls and reach heaven. What, indeed, is the state of religion in those countries which have left the bosom of the Catholic Church ? Having fallen away from Catholic unity, these sects have been split into an infinity of subdivisions,—they have gone on from error to error,—from one absurdity to another, until at last they have reached a frightful rationalism, which seeks to annihilate all revealed truth, and cast the nations of the earth once more into the most hopeless darkness. No, the Scriptures are not sufficient ; all that they contain are truths, but these truths must be pointed out to us by a hand which God has rendered infallible ; all that they contain are truths, but they themselves tell us that our divine Lord has done and said many things, which have not been written ; and yet not one iota of revealed truth must be lost. Condescend, O my God, to tell me in whose hands Thou hast deposited the treasure of Thy adorable doctrine, and from whom Thou wishest, that I should receive it whole and entire.

The truth is not far from us. Hear how our divine Saviour speaks to St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles : “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. As the Father sent me, I also send

you." To all the Apostles He says: Go ye, and teach all nations, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I will be with you, all days, even to the consummation of the world; and not only I will be with you, but I pray my Father that He may send you another Comforter, who will dwell with you forever, and teach you all truth. There must then be a chair of truth, elevated, visible and incorruptible, to dispense true knowledge to men. Such a chair was indispensable, says St. Augustine; therefore the wisdom of God established it. It exists then, this infallible chair, shedding on every side the true light which enlighteneth the world:—this chair is the Church of Jesus Christ,—the Catholic Church,—the Church which has never changed, which is always the same, which has ever driven from its bosom all who would dare attempt to make innovations in its doctrine. It is the true fold, whose supreme Pastor is Jesus Christ; it is the city of light and of peace, built upon an immovable rock, and in which dwelleth the truth without admixture of error; it is the pillar and the ground of truth. Christians, may we never depart from this holy city; let us keep close to this pillar reared by the hand of God, and let us walk in the path of truth, by the light of that lamp lighted by the Son of the Most High, who deceives not, and who enlightens every man that cometh into this world. We will then be *there* where God calls us, for there we will ever find Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and the Holy Ghost, who penetrates even the depths of God himself.

My Brethren, be careful, I say to you with St. Paul; hold fast the unity of faith, lest you be carried away by the wind of false doctrine, and by the craft of men who lie in wait to draw you into error. Remember those words of the Son of God: "If any one will not hear the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a publican;" as a public sinner, and a man without God and without hope. Never suffer yourselves to be seduced by false prophets; avoid the discourses of these proud and hypocritical men, who, as St. Peter says, wrest the sense of the Scriptures to their own perdition. Fly those false teachers who, rejecting the truths revealed by God, flatter the corrupt desires and bad passions of the human heart by false, deceitful words. But come to the school which Jesus has opened among us, come to the chair of Peter, the sole



depository of the doctrine that came from heaven; there alone will you find true light, divine grace, the words of life, of eternal life.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXIII.

NINTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

### COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

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“Giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light.”—COLOSSIANS, i: 12.

THE ninth article of our creed is thus set forth: “The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.” I have already explained to you the first part; I have told you what is this Church, founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by what characteristic marks you can distinguish it from all the sects that dare boast of being that holy fold, of which Jesus Christ is the Supreme Pastor; of being the church which He has firmly built upon a rock, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail. You know now that this church, one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic, is the Church of Rome, in which you have had the happiness of being born. It remains for me now to explain the second part of the ninth article, which is the Communion of Saints. Give me your undivided attention.

When good Christians are called out of this life by God, they do not cease to belong to the Catholic Church, and to be still children of the spouse of Jesus Christ. While some of her children still wage war upon earth, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, the enemies of all God’s servants; others, already victorious in the fearful combat, triumph and rejoice in heaven; and others again suffer great pains in purgatory, in expiation of the faults, which through human frailty, they have committed, and for which they

had not entirely satisfied the divine justice when death came to call them to judgment. Hence the Church is usually divided into the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant, and the Church Suffering.

The Church Militant is composed of the Saints who are still on earth; it is this visible Church, whose members are here below engaged in battle with the enemy of their salvation. All indeed are not Saints, although the Apostle calls them such; but all should and could become Saints, and all have been stamped with the seal of sanctity in their baptism.

The Church Triumphant is composed of the Saints in heaven. It is that glorious Church of which St. Paul speaks; that Church perfectly holy, where there is neither stain, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing; it is that City of God, that Heavenly Jerusalem, whence death is forever banished, and where tears, and weeping, and sorrow shall be no more, because these things have passed away for those who inhabit it.

Finally, the Church Suffering is formed by the Saints in purgatory, where the souls of the faithful are detained, who have departed this life in the grace of God, but in whom His all-seeing eye has discovered faults not yet fully expiated, and stains which must be purified in the crucible of sufferings, before they can be admitted to the Beatific Vision. For as nothing defiled can enter the kingdom of heaven, these holy souls will be excluded from it until the fire of purgatory will have taken away their least stain, and rendered them pure and white as snow.

Whether carrying on a warfare on earth, reigning with Jesus Christ in heaven, or suffering in purgatory, the members of the Catholic Church are all united to one another, by mutual relations, and by indissoluble ties. This union we call, with the Apostles, *the Communion of Saints*. It consists in a union of the Saints on earth among themselves, a union of the Saints on earth with the Saints in heaven, a union of the Saints on earth with the Saints in purgatory.

How are the Saints on earth united among themselves? On earth, all constitute one and the same kingdom, one and the same family, and the Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, all are but one in Christ Jesus, says the Apostle. All form one and the

same body, of which Jesus Christ is the head, and of which the Holy Ghost is the soul and the life. In this body, each member receives gifts, and performs actions, which are his property, but which at the same time also are for the benefit of all. Jesus Christ has bequeathed to His Church all spiritual blessings as her dowry and inheritance. It is in common, therefore, that we possess them, and the virtue of each particular Christian becomes a benefit to the whole society in such a way, that every faithful soul in the Church can say, that he has his part in the merits of all those who fear the Lord and keep His commandments. Yes, my Brethren, each faithful Christian partakes in all the prayers which are offered in the Church, in all the virtues which are practised within her pale, in all the graces which her children receive, in all the merits which they acquire, in all the talents, in all the titles, in all the sublime deeds which we so much admire, in all the victories which they have achieved, and in all the wonders which they have performed. The abundance of one supplies the want of another. All these good works form, as it were, an immense treasure, from which all are invited to draw salvation and sanctification. And what is particularly touching in this beautiful Communion of Saints, is that sinners, even the most guilty, are not absolutely excluded, as long as they remain in the Church and preserve the faith of Jesus Christ. They are dead branches, it is true, but still hanging to the tree; they can revive and bloom again, and once more bring forth good fruits. They are the unnatural children of the most affectionate of mothers; but the Church preserves toward them all her natural tenderness; she intercedes in their behalf as if each one were her only child, and though their sins deprive them of all these spiritual benefits, which they can not possess without being in the state of grace, nevertheless, they have a large share in the unspeakable groanings which the Church continually sends up to heaven to obtain the grace of perseverance for the just and the grace of conversion for sinners.

There is a Communion of Saints on earth; hence the Apostles exhort Christians to remain always united in mind and heart, to entertain a truly fraternal affection and tenderness toward each other, helping each other by mutual assistance, and above all, "to pray for one another, so that all may be saved." This mutual affection—



this brotherly love—the soul of the Communion of Saints, in the Church militant, is also the bond of intimate union which unites the children of the Church militant with the Saints of the Church triumphant. “These Saints are seated on the same throne with Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ is seated on the same throne with His Father,” says St. John the Apostle; that is to say, they are inseparably united to Jesus Christ, and reign with Him in His glory. We have nothing then to ask for the Saints who are in heaven. Their sanctity, like their happiness, is beyond the reach of danger; they have no need of our prayers; but they know how much we stand in need of theirs. “They see in the light of Jesus Christ,” says St. Paulinus, “things the most secret and the most distant; they see all things in God, in whom all are contained.” Jesus Christ says to them: I do not call you servants any more, because the servant knoweth not what his master does; but I call you friends, because I have nothing hidden from you. “They know in heaven infinitely better than on earth,” says St. Bernard, “our affections, our desires, our miseries, our weaknesses, our cares, our temptations, our dangers, our misfortunes; they do not forget that they are still our brethren; they take a lively interest in every thing that regards our welfare; they pray, and, as friends of the Saviour, they obtain for us the graces which we so much need.”

Behold, what the Saints do for us. And we, on our part, honor them as the blessed children of God, we take them as our models, we love them as friends, we invoke them as protectors, and in this flowing and reflowing of charity we find an abundant source of succors and blessings.

But, while we receive from the Saints of heaven aid and assistance, there are other souls much cherished by God, who have recourse to us, and implore our prayers and intercession: these are the faithful departed. They died, it is true, in the grace of God, but their love was not sufficiently perfect to efface all the remains of their sins; they are, therefore, “saved, but so as by fire.” They suffer and will continue to suffer, until they have discharged their entire debt. They are unable to help themselves, but we can assist them, for we can obtain grace and mercy for ourselves and for them.

We offer for the repose of the souls in purgatory, prayers and sacrifices; for the Holy Ghost says, “it is a holy and a wholesome

thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." The poor man offers his prayers for the suffering souls, and thereby relieves and delivers them. The rich,—the man to whom the Lord has intrusted a part of the good things of this world, draws upon his treasury and gives to the poor in behalf of the souls in purgatory, and his alms cover and blot out in the other world a multitude of sins. Oh, how beautiful, how sweet and consoling it is to be able to say, that even a penny given to buy bread for the destitute, can deliver a poor soul from its frightful sufferings, and give it a place at the banquet of the Lord, in the eternal mansions! Let us pray then for the souls in purgatory; let us give alms, let us perform good works, and let us ask God to apply the merit of them to the suffering souls, and be sure, my Brethren, that we shall obtain, if not their entire deliverance, at least the remission of a portion of their debts, a diminution of sufferings for them, and abundant consolation for ourselves. Ah! my Brethren, is not gratitude the virtue of the Saints? The holy souls, whom we will deliver by our prayers, will pray for us, and God will grant us graces to assist us to persevere in truth and virtue,—in the way of faith and salvation.

Behold, my Brethren, this beautiful and divine Communion of Saints, your belief in which from your childhood, you have learned to profess every time you repeated the Apostles' Creed. Let us never forget it. Let us congratulate ourselves on belonging to this holy Church, out of which, no one can have part in the Communion of Saints; let us keep ourselves closely united to the Saints on earth, meriting, by our piety, the privilege of partaking in all the good works they perform; to the Saints in purgatory, by seizing with pious eagerness every occasion of aiding them by our prayers and good works; to the Saints in heaven, by devoutly and sincerely imploring the assistance of their prayers and their powerful intercession with God; that walking in their footsteps and imitating their virtues, we may merit to be one day admitted into their triumphant society, to enjoy in the bosom of Abraham the eternal delights of the blessed.—AMEN.

## SERMON XXIV.

THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH ARTICLES OF THE CREED.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND RESURRECTION OF  
THE BODY.

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“I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body.”—**APOSTLES’ CREED.**

IN my last instruction, my Brethren, I endeavored to explain to you what is understood by the communion of saints. We acknowledge in the Church of Jesus Christ a holy community of spiritual goods and riches, which our divine Saviour has established between the different members that compose this great body of which He is the head. Happy communion of saints, that makes us partakers of the good works and merits of all our brethren in Jesus Christ, and establishes such sweet and precious relations between the saints of heaven, the saints on earth, and the saints in purgatory! To-day, my Brethren, I wish to direct your attention to two other articles of our creed, which are thus expressed: “The Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body.” The exposition of these two dogmas of our holy religion is of great moment to all Christians; I therefore hope that you will pay a due attention.

What does the tenth article of our creed,—“the Forgiveness of Sins,” teach us? This inestimable article of our faith discloses to us one of the greatest blessings which the bounty of God has granted to man. Can our mind conceive a more endearing or more consoling truth, than that contained in these few words,—“the Forgiveness of Sins?” Yes, we firmly believe, and with a certainty founded on the word of God, that our bountiful Saviour has intrusted to the wisdom of His Church, the sovereign power of Forgiving Sins, and has opened in the bosom of the holy city this abundant source of consolation and peace. We were conceived in



sin, "we were born children of wrath," as the Holy Ghost declares to us; every day we learn more and more our own weakness, and we find it to be immense. In fact, too often is our soul stained with sin, for the just man falls seven times a day. But does not the word of God declare that nothing impure, nothing defiled, shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven? What then would have become of us, how great would be our despair, did not the cheering light of faith show us in the bosom of the Church an inexhaustible treasure of bounty and mercy? Yes, we can yet attain heaven, for in the Church there is Forgiveness of Sins.

But let us understand well the meaning of this article of our creed. To whom has our Lord and Saviour given power to Forgive Sins? This power, which He possesses by His own nature, for He is God; this power, which He obtained by the efficacy of His merits, in His quality of Saviour, He has communicated by grace to His Church, because it is His spouse. This truly divine power,—the greatest that can be given to man, Jesus has communicated to men, and even to sinners; not to all men, not to all the children of the Church, but to His Apostles, to those whom He has appointed to the government and care of His flock. To them, He says: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Divine Saviour, God, Thy Father, sent Thee among us to destroy sin, to blot out the iniquity of the world, to save poor sinners; be Thou praised, O my Jesus! Thou hast accomplished the will of Thy Father, and behold, to complete Thy divine work, and continue Thy heavenly mission, Thou didst command Thy Apostles to go and preach to all nations that the justice of God had been satisfied on Calvary, that heaven was again thrown open to man, and that the sins Thy ministers would forgive, should be forgiven, and the sins they would retain, should be retained.

It was to the Church in the person of the Apostles, that our bountiful Saviour granted this supreme power of Forgiving Sins: it will always subsist, for the Church will subsist to the very end of time, and there will always be sinners to seek grace and pardon. This divine power passed from the Apostles to their successors, and these communicate it to priests at the moment they impart to them the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. The fruits of Christ's

death will last forever ; it must, therefore, be perpetually applied and communicated ; the remission of sins will, therefore, always be continued in the Church till the consummation of the world. Jesus Christ will be with His Church to the very end of ages, and every day He will employ the tongues and the hands of His priests to remit the sins of men ; not some sins, but all sins, no matter how enormous they may be, no matter how numerous.

But how shall we obtain the pardon of our sins ? Principally, my Brethren, by receiving those sacraments instituted by our Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, especially baptism and penance. It was to these sacred signs our Saviour was pleased to attach His grace. When the holy water of baptism was poured upon your heads, you were washed, purified from original sin, and from all actual sin, which you had committed since your birth ; you were justified and regenerated in Jesus Christ, and, children of wrath as you were, you became the children of God by grace. But there are few who preserve the grace of this baptism ; there are few who keep without stain the beautiful robes of innocence with which they were clothed at the moment of their regeneration. Therefore our divine Lord instituted the sacrament of penance, in which we can obtain Forgiveness of Sins committed after baptism. In it we find a second plank after shipwreck. "It is the second gate," as Tertullian calls it, "which God placed in His city, that those who knock might enter ; it was placed there, as baptism can be received but once, that, after this door of innocence was closed, the misfortune of sinners might not be without resource." These two inestimable sacraments, therefore, are justly called the sacraments of the dead ; in fact, they raise us from the spiritual death inflicted on the soul by sin, and restore us to life by reëstablishing us in grace.

I doubt not that the sentiments which reign in your souls, are those of the most profound gratitude toward God. You justly owe it to the Lord, my Brethren, for His bounty has granted you to be born in the bosom of the Church established by His divine Son, in the bosom of the only spouse of Jesus, to which alone He granted the high and truly divine power of remitting sins. It is there, and there only, that you will obtain pardon for the faults which sully your souls ; it is there only that fallen man can be restored to life,—

to grace, and can advance toward the endless happiness of heaven, where virtue finds its recompense. Alas! our lot would have been most deserving of pity,—most unfortunate, if God, in punishment of our infidelity to His service, had refused to grant us the pardon of our sins; if He had taken from us the hope of being ever restored to His favor. Our misfortune would have been irremediable, and we would all have been victims of the devouring fire of hell; for who among us dare flatter himself that he has never committed one single mortal sin from the day he was baptised? Let us then bless from the bottom of our hearts the divine mercy, for an immense favor has been betowed upon us, an adorable grace imparted to us from heaven! God condescends to promise the pardon of our sins, and, to merit it for us, the Son of God shed every drop of His blood! But is it not with difficulty we can obtain this pardon, which is the price of the death of a God? How great is the charity of the Lord, since, to restore us to His grace and His love, He requires only a sincere repentance and a frank and open avowal of our sins, in the tribunal of penance. But do not deceive yourselves; without repentance, there is no pardon: “God is just as well as merciful,” says St. Fulgencius; “His justice prevents Him from overlooking sin, as His mercy prevents Him from refusing pardon to the repenting sinner.” You ask of me salvation, says the Lord to us, and on my part I require from you the conversion of your heart. Do what I command, and you shall have what I promise. “Be converted to me, and you shall be saved.”\* “He will not reject the humble and contrite heart, and He always yields to the sacrifice of the tears of penance,—to those tears which are the blood of the heart,” as St. Augustine says.

Behold, my Brethren, the consoling doctrine contained in this article of the creed, “the Forgiveness of Sins.” What is promised us by the other part of the article, “the Resurrection of the Body?” “Thy dead men shall live,” says Isaias; “my slain shall rise again”† saith the Lord. And again: Thus saith the Lord concerning these dry bones: “ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you,

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\* Isaias, xlv: 22.

† Isaias, xxvi: 19.



and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin : and I will give you spirit ; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”\* On the last day our souls will be again united to our bodies,—to those bodies which we have at present, and which soon will be laid in the grave. Yes, we can all repeat those beautiful words of holy Job : “ I know that my Redeemer liveth ; and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth : And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God ; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold : this my hope is laid up in my bosom.”†

It will be so, my Brethren, for the Son of God himself has said it : “ Amen, amen I say unto you, that the hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. . . . Wonder not at this ; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that have done good, shall come forth unto the Resurrection of life ; but they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of judgment.”‡ Behold the reason why we shall be called to life again ; it is “ that every one may receive the proper things of the body,” which was the instrument of the soul, “ according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil.”§

There will be a great difference, as far as regards the bodies, in the Resurrection of the dead. The bodies of the just will rise from the tomb, radiant and glorious ; they will, says the Holy Ghost, shine like stars in the firmament, and thus they will ascend to the abode of eternal delights. The frightful hideousness of sin will be depicted in every feature of the face, and in every part of the sinner’s body ; the reprobate will be horrified at his own appearance, and will precipitate himself into the dreadful torments of hell. Oh ! my Brethren, the Resurrection of the dead, like the general judgment, is a terrible, though consoling truth ! Let us meditate upon it frequently and with attention ; it will inspire us with the fear of sin and animate us to the love of virtue ; it will console us when pressed down by grief and disappointment ; it will fortify us in our sorrows, encourage us in our labors, and support us in adversity. I will be rewarded both in my soul and my body, if I do good ; I will do so, for I wish to attain heaven. The remembrance of my past sins shall not frighten me ; for the Lord makes it a duty for me

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\* Ezech., xxxvii : 4—6. † Job, xix : 25—27. ‡ John, v : 25, 28, 29. § 2 Cor., v : 10.

to believe firmly in His mercy, and He promises me the pardon of my sins, if I repent of them from the bottom of my heart. I will place confidence in the tenderness of my mother, the Church, the spouse of Jesus Christ, who has received from her heavenly bridegroom, an omnipotent gift of mercy. I will tell her of my repentance, and she will open to me the gates of a happy eternity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXV.

### TWELFTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.

### THE TWO ETERNITIES.

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“And life everlasting.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

“THE Lord God holds the whole world in His hand; for Him nothing is afar off; in the twinkling of an eye, He could collect all the ashes of the dead, all the parts of our bodies which have been devoured by the fish, by the birds, or by insects, and which perhaps have been carried to places the most remote from each other.”\* Faith also teaches us that our bodies will come forth alive from the darkness of the grave, and that we shall see with our own eyes the coming of the Sovereign Judge. We must all appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, that each one among us may receive, in his soul and in his body, according to the good or the bad deeds which he did, during his pilgrimage in this world. Behold, my Brethren, the truth which formed the subject of our last instruction. To-day, we will explain this important and last article of the creed,—“life everlasting.” What is this life everlasting, which the twelfth article of the creed announces to us? It is the life which at the moment of our death begins for us, in heaven or in hell, and which will never have an end. The life of eternal happiness in heaven, or of eternal misery in hell. Every man who believes in

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\* St. Cyril's Catechism, c. 18.

God must necessarily believe in the existence of a heaven,—where virtue is recompensed, and in the existence of a hell, where vice is punished; for, if on the one hand, God is worthily honored and faithfully served in this world, on the other, it can not be denied that He is sadly offended, and offended with impunity. Now, can any one believe that God is just, and not be convinced that He will recompense those who serve Him, and that sooner or later He will punish those who offend Him? If He afflicts the just man and permits him to suffer in this world, it is because He reserves for him hereafter a glorious recompense. If He allows those who insult and outrage Him, to enjoy the peace and comforts of this life, it is because He prepares for them a terrible retribution after death. Yes, there is an eternal life, where He will render to every one according to his works: the good and the virtuous who are now deprived of earthly enjoyments, will be crowned with bliss and glory; the wicked who go unpunished, and who often have all the comforts of worldly prosperity, will then feel the effects of His vengeance. To convince us of this truth, says Tertullian, we have no need to seek for proofs, since our divine Lord has expressly declared it, nor need we make long researches after what the Evangelist has told us.

This doctrine, so terrible and at the same time so consoling, was often recalled to the minds of the disciples by the Son of God; He constantly spoke to them of a future life,—of the kingdom of heaven,—of a kingdom which was not of this world, where He would be forever with His triumphant Church. He told them that when sufferings and afflictions came upon them, that they should not be discouraged, but rejoice and be glad, and that they should cast their eyes toward heaven, because there a great recompense awaited them. He forewarned them of the persecutions which they would have to suffer in this world; but He also said to them: “Fear not those that kill the body, and can not kill the soul: but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.”\* We likewise hear the voice of our Saviour proclaiming the existence of an eternal life, when He pronounces the last sentence upon the world, upon all men assembled together at the foot

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\* St. Matthew, x: 28.



of His tribunal, in the valley of judgment. To the just He says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." But to the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. And these," add the Evangelist, "shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting."\*

The just shall go into life everlasting, where God becomes the great recompense of those who loved Him on earth. They will see Him in himself, and in His own substance; they will contemplate His beauty, His wisdom, His justice, His goodness, His mercy, and all His infinite perfections. God communicates himself to His friends, in heaven; they have the happiness of loving Him, of blessing Him, and of perpetually glorifying Him; they possess Him, and are bound to Him by the most endearing and the most indissoluble ties; they no more fear being ever separated from Him; they will be forever in the beautiful kingdom of heaven, seated eternally at the banquet of the Lamb, plunged in the torrent of the pure delights of the paradise of Jesus,—in that unspeakable happiness which the Apostle who saw it, could find no other words to express than these: "The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."† In a word, they will be infinitely happy.

But, on the other side, behold how the angels, those spirits who were created to execute the commands of God, and to serve as His ministers, have faithfully accomplished the will of the Son of Man. They have traversed His immense kingdom,—they have collected together in one place all scandals, that is to say, all depraved and corrupt hearts,—all those who worked iniquity,—all obstinate sinners,—all whose foreheads are branded with the curse of God. The earth opens, and angels precipitate them into hell. Hell is a burning furnace,—a cavern of fire,—a lake of brimstone and pitch,—an inextinguishable fire, wherewith the wicked will be penetrated and as if salted, according to emphatic expression employed by one of the prophets, and repeated by Jesus Christ himself. There, nothing

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\* St. Matthew, xxv : 34, 41, 46.

† 1 Corinthians, ii : 9.

will be heard but groaning, weeping and gnashing of teeth; there, the reprobate will be Eternally separated from God, the Supreme Good,—forever deprived of seeing Him,—driven from His bosom,—abandoned to regrets,—to remorse,—to despair, because they did not wish to employ the days of their first life, in procuring an Eternally happy life. There, in those frightful torments, will be found those proud and criminally insensible men, who, in this world believed themselves so prudent and so wise. They placed in one hand sin and its false joys, and in the other, the Eternity of heaven and the Eternity of hell; they weighed them, and having dared pronounce the two Eternities as overbalanced, they chose sin,—they swallowed iniquity like water, and they died in their impenitence. “But the judgments of God are just and equitable.” Behold how these sinners have been also weighed in the balance of the Sovereign Judge; they have been found wanting,—they are rejected,—they are plunged into hell. They would have desired to sin Eternally,—they will be Eternally punished, “and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever.”\* Their sentence, says St. Chrysostom, is written in indelible characters upon the immovable pillars of Eternity. “I remembered God,” says the Prophet, “and was exercised; and my spirit swooned away. My eyes prevented the watches: I was troubled, and I spoke not. I thought upon the days of old: and I had in my mind the Eternal years. And I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit. Will God then cast off for ever? Or will He never be more favorable again? Or will He cut off His mercy forever, from generation to generation.”†

During all Eternity, my Brethren, we shall be either with God in heaven, or with the devils in hell. What then is Eternity? Is it millions of years? Ah! millions of years pass, but Eternity passes not,—it is always beginning. “O Eternity! Eternity!” cries out St. Augustine, “Can any one think of thee, advance toward thee, and yet neglect his salvation? Can any one think of thee and not have a desire to change his life, to become better, to reform his heart, and to supplant the love of vice by the love of virtue, and the practice of piety and religion? Will this man be

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\* Apocalypse, xiv : 11.

† Psalms, lxxvi : 4—9.

happy? Or will he be miserable forever? He seems not to care much, unhappy man that he is, thereby showing that he has lost both his reason and his conscience." How few there are who can say with the royal prophet: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life; that I may see the delight of the Lord, and may visit His temple."\* Alas! far more numerous is the multitude of those who, though convinced of the truth of a future life, of an Eternity of happiness and an Eternity of misery, yet neglect and forget their salvation, pass their lives without ever thinking of their souls and their God, give themselves up entirely to the care of their bodies, employ every means to shelter themselves from the sorrows of this short life, and never once reflect that they are every day advancing nearer and nearer the brink of hell. They adore the beast,—the devil, and his image,—the world;—they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels, and in the sight of the Lamb, forever and ever. "Now is an end come upon thee, and I will send my wrath upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways: and I will set all thy abominations against thee. And my eye shall not spare thee, and I will show thee no pity: but I will lay thy ways upon thee: and thy abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and you shall know that I am the Lord,"† your God. "I shall take care not to defer," says St. Bernard, in his sermon on the Canticle, "for I fear falling into the hands of the living God. I shall, therefore, examine my desires, and my acts, that when He shall come who is to visit and 'search Jerusalem with lamps,'‡ He may find nothing in me which can be condemned at His tribunal." Yes, my Brethren, let us ever direct our thoughts toward that future life which awaits us after death, and into which we shall soon enter; for every breath we draw, and every step we take, brings us nearer to the grave. Eternal happiness in heaven! Misery without resource and without end in hell! Oh! let us employ soul and body, mind and heart, to gain a place in the paradise of God. Let us bear the yoke of the Lord with courage, let us detest sin, live holy lives, multiply our good works, make good use of the few hours which God counts

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\* Psalms, xxvi: 4. † Ezechiel, vii: 3, 4. ‡ Sophonias, i: 12.



out to us in this world, let us advance toward heaven by never losing sight of these two consoling, and yet awful words: Ever! Never! In hell, torments never ending, sufferings ever beginning;—if I die in sin, such will be my lot. In heaven my happiness will never finish. I shall forever exult in its ineffable delights,—if while on earth, purity and the love of God reign in my soul; if I do what God commands me, live according to the precepts of His Church; in a word, if my life be wise, Christian and holy. O! if I depart this life in the grace of God, my happiness will be Eternal. AMEN.

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## SERMON XXVI.

TWELFTH ARTICLE OF THE CREED.—(CONTINUED.)

### ETERNAL LIFE—OR DEATH.

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“Life everlasting.”—APOSTLES’ CREED.

EITHER an Eternity of happiness, or an Eternity of misery; behold the destiny reserved for man. We should all, my Brethren, sigh after the felicity of heaven. We should all fear the doom of the reprobate in hell. Our lot in Eternity will be the consequence of our life here below. Everlasting misery awaits him who will have violated the holy law of God, who will have done evil, and died without repentance. Boundless happiness will be the portion of every faithful servant of the Lord, of every one who will have done the will of his divine Master, practised patience, and constantly walked in the way of His commandments. Let us consider this important truth, and let us beg of God grace to thoroughly understand it.

My Brethren, what is the state of your mind, your heart, and your conscience? Are they tranquil, or are you the prey of uneasiness and trouble? You often say that riches, honors and pleasures do not constitute true happiness. No, were you in possession of

all the riches of the world, elevated to the highest honors, and surrounded with all the pleasures which the imagination of man can invent, you could not be happy, if your heart be enslaved by any evil passion; if your conscience justly reproach you, and if it can say to you in those terrible accents, which it knows so well how to assume; “Here, you have tarnished the beauty and innocence of an immortal soul, have sullied the purity of a heart redeemed by the blood of Christ: there, your hand has plundered the property of your neighbor; or you have ruined his character by detraction and calumny; you have pierced with sorrow the bosom of a poor widow, and rendered a family desolate; or, you have been negligent in the care of your own family, and have grossly violated your obligations to God,—to your neighbor, and to yourself. If your conscience can thus reproach you, you are guilty, and can not be happy. Shame and sorrow are ever the inseparable companions of the man who violates the laws of God and of conscience. Peace and tranquillity of soul are the heritage only of the wise and virtuous. Examine, then, your hearts. No doubt, there will be found in this audience more than one faithful soul who can with truth say: “I have always made it an inviolable duty to bridle my anger, to close my heart to the suggestions of self-love and avarice, to repel with courage the flattering words of sensual pleasure, and of every evil passion. I have loved and served my God, I have loved my neighbor, and done good to all. Thus, I possess the sweet joy of peace and tranquillity of heart; I look up with confidence toward my God,—I hope in Him, and I see approaching without much fear that moment, wherein I must enter into my Eternity.” Yes, my Brethren, there are many among you, to whom this language is applicable. May God grant, that there is no one here who can say of himself: “I am never perfectly happy; there is something in my heart, which robs me of repose. The sins of my youth are always present to my mind, and afflict my heart. I know, I feel that I have been a perverse child; I have saddened my good parents. I have been a bad father; I have neglected my business and my family; I have lost and perverted to profane uses, the precious time which heaven had bestowed upon me. I have been a wicked Christian; I have not served my God,—I have not loved my neighbor, and injustice has soiled my soul. I know that God wills that my heart

should be elevated toward Him,—should be centered in Him; and, on the contrary, I am bewildered in the love of worldly pursuits,—I have no relish for the things of heaven. Oh! I tremble at the thoughts of Eternity, into which I must soon enter!”

If you have been just, good and virtuous, happiness and peace will pervade your hearts; if you have been wicked, vicious and guilty, you will be tormented in the inmost recesses of your soul.

If, in the present life, such is the order established by God that we shall be happy, or unhappy, according as we lead good or evil lives, must we not thence conclude that the same will hold good in the life to come; and that we will be happy, or miserable for eternity, according to the good or the evil we shall have done on earth? “Not only the justice of God requires that such should be the case, but, says a holy writer, your own heart demands it. If on earth you have not loved your brethren; if you have been hard-hearted, passionate, envious, ungrateful and impure; if you have despised the knowledge of God and His perfections; if the thought of the Almighty was a burden, you will not be pleased in heaven, in the society of the saints, so sweet, so good, so generous, so pure! you would not be at ease in the habitation of the elect; that is not your place.” If you desire to be happy in heaven with God,—with the angels and the saints, you must live in such a manner as to deserve it; love God and keep His law, for the present life is the source of the happiness, or the misery of the future.

Man will reap what he has sown. He who sows in the flesh and lives only according to bad desires and evil passions, will reap only misery; but he who sows in spirit and lives according to the law of God and of conscience, will reap life everlasting. Your soul is the field which God has given you to cultivate: if you sow nothing in it, or if you sow only vice and sin, bad will be the crop; you will reap your own ruin. If on the contrary you sow in it the seeds of divine and fraternal charity,—the love of God and of your neighbor, justice, purity and piety,—you will have an abundant harvest: eternal happiness, union with God in this world,—union with God in heaven. Your soul is like a tree: if God find that it brings forth good fruit, He will preserve it for heaven; if He discover on it only bad fruit, He will command it to be cut down and cast into the fire. The word of God is express, my Brethren; the happy life in heaven



is the recompense, the result of a virtuous life in this world. What practical conclusions ought we not to draw from this truth?

If such is the will of God, that our future happiness depends upon the life which we lead in this world, we ought surely hold in the highest esteem the time which God has given us, and use it with the utmost diligence in performing well all our ordinary actions.

There is nothing which we esteem or respect less than the time granted to us by heaven to pass on earth; nothing, which in some sort is more of a burden to us. We dissipate it and lose it in a thousand ways. I know, and willingly confess that sometimes recreation is necessary. We can not be always praying, reading, meditating or working. Mind and body alike have need of some relaxation to recruit their strength: but to pass a great part of our lives in doing nothing, or in assisting at those diversions which are only suited to weaken us, to enervate us, and to lead us into the paths of vice, are not the relaxations which the body and the soul require; on the contrary, they are sources of affliction to them, since they make us lose that precious time, of which we will one day have to render a strict account to the Lord.

And nevertheless, generally speaking, we know well the value of the rapid hours of our life, but only when there is question of temporal interest or advantages. Thus, you fathers and mothers, with the utmost sincerity, will say to your son: "My child, seek knowledge now,—take advantage of your youth to store your mind with learning and science. . . . When you will have arrived at man's estate, you will repent, if you have not done so." You say to this youth: "Work, try to make yourself perfect in your trade or profession,—profit by this time which is given you to learn it, if you do not wish to be classed in after life among the ignorant and incompetent." You say to this other, who is the father of a family: "If you do not work while you have time,—if at present you seek your own ease and pleasure, in place of attending to the interests of your family, you will one day feel the blush of shame on your brow, and the bitterness of grief in your soul, when your children will ask you for bread, and you will have none to give them." You speak thus, my Brethren, and you are right;—but should we not also sometimes say to ourselves: Now is the time to learn, to study, to work for Eternity? And without neglecting the care of your

family, could you not find time to take care of your soul? Without ceasing to think of your profession or your commerce, could you not work at the great affair of your salvation? Without discontinuing your sowing or your planting for time, what prevents you from keeping your hand on that plough which labors for Eternity?

Alas! how blind man is! He attaches his heart only to things visible,—perishable and fleeting,—and he disregards those which never fade and never perish! All his activity and courage are employed to procure what he must quit on the confines of life,—but he ever thinks it time enough to commence working at some future day for the endless happiness of heaven. For one penny, says Thomas à Kempis, men sometimes shamefully quarrel,—but for Eternal life, they will scarcely move a foot from the ground. How much better would it be for us to put our time to good account, by seriously reflecting that the day which passes is the price of Eternity.

Listen to those words of our divine Lord. “Walk while you have the light.”\* Behold, “the night cometh when no man can work.”† To-day it is still possible, nay even easy for you to gain heaven: say not then, I will do it to-morrow; for to-morrow, perhaps, the bell will announce your death. Think of this, ye men of business, and do not permit yourselves to be absorbed in the cares of the world. Think of it, ye men of pleasure, who bearing in your breast a guilty conscience, yet laugh and sport, though you are suspended over the abyss of endless misery by a single thread. Let us all think of it, my Brethren, and let us endeavor to do something for God and for our souls.

And here let me warn you against a defect which we may remark in so many. There are, in fact, persons who seem to have a double conscience,—very timorous on certain points,—very lax and easy on others no less important. They will be very exact in serving God on Sundays, and will not for any consideration engage in the slightest work on this holy day. That is all very good,—but on working days, these people are also unoccupied, and constantly neglect the duties of their state. Another one has a horror of blasphemy and cursing, but he permits his tongue to indulge freely

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\* St. John, xii : 35.

† St. John, ix : 4.

in calumny and detraction. Some will carefully avoid all actions which God and religion condemn, but they make very little account of the bad thoughts that trouble their imagination, or of the evil desires that fill their hearts. This is understanding very badly what religion and God command. Is it not said that he who transgresses one divine precept, becomes guilty of all? Are there no sins except Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, and impurity of act? Are impurity of heart and detraction to be regarded as lawful? No, no. God is not the judge of some sins, but of all. He is not severe on some sins, and indifferent to others. Every mortal sin shuts heaven close. Since our Eternal happiness is the consequence and the recompense of our life here below, let us endeavor to render this life equally good and holy, in the wishes which we form in the bottom of our hearts,—in the words which we pronounce,—in the actions which we perform. Let every thing in us correspond worthily to the will of God. Let us love God with our whole soul,—with all our mind,—with all our heart,—with all our strength; we will then fulfill His entire law, and our lot in Eternity will be that of the elect.—AMEN.





## PART II.

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### SERMON XXVII.

#### ON HOPE.

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“In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.”—PSALMS, xxx:1.

WITHOUT faith, says the Apostle, it is impossible to please God, and the wrath of God presses with all its weight, upon the children of incredulity. The truths which God deigned to reveal to the world, and which the Church of Jesus Christ proposes for your belief, have been presented to your minds and hearts, in the explanation of the Apostles' Creed which I have given you. But to attain heaven, is it sufficient for us to have faith? No. We have a second duty to fulfill, which is that of Hope. We must Hope in God, we must Hope for, and expect with confidence to receive, what God in His Goodness has promised us. “Faith,” says a father of the Church, “is the foundation of the edifice of our salvation, Hope is the body, and charity is the crown.” Christian Hope will then be the subject of our instruction to-day. I propose telling you what we ought to Hope for from the goodness of God, and the qualities which should distinguish the Hope of the Christian.

To Hope, is to expect with confidence a benefit, a favor, or any advantage whatever, which has been promised us. If the promise was made us by man, the Hope which we would have in the realization of his word, would be only a natural and purely human Hope: this is not the Hope which conducts to heaven. But our Hope is supernatural and divine, if, built upon faith, we Hope and expect such and such favors, because God has promised them to us. To Hope, in the Christian signification of the word, is to expect with

confidence the gifts which the goodness of God has condescended to promise us. This sublime Hope is a supernatural virtue, which the Lord infused into our hearts, the moment the waters of baptism flowed upon our foreheads. It is this virtue which directs us to place our trust in God, and to cast, according to the language of the Scriptures, all our care upon the bosom of God, our Heavenly Father, to fly to Him in all our wants, and with the utmost confidence to expect from His bounty and paternal solicitude, every blessing which He has promised us, both for this life and the life to come.

What are these blessings then, which we may expect with a firm confidence? God loves all men, all without exception, and with the love of a father: He, therefore, most certainly wishes to make us all happy. He takes us all under His powerful protection; and will consequently provide for the support of our existence; He will defend us against our enemies; He will console us in all our afflictions and all our disappointments. The Apostle St. Peter, was well persuaded of this consoling truth, when he invites us to unbosom ourselves of all those things which disturb our peace, and to cast our care on the Lord, because the Lord himself has care of us, to such a degree, that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without the permission of our heavenly Father, as Jesus Christ himself declared. This is what we Hope for, and expect from God in the present life; but the promises which He makes us for the life to come, are incomparably more magnificent. Enlightened by the bright rays of divine faith, we can say with the Apostle: "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, hath regenerated us unto a lively Hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not, reserved in heaven for you."\* Yes, my God, Thy infinite bounty promises to receive us into heaven, to associate us with the angels in happiness, to overwhelm our souls with a torrent of delights during all eternity; but this inexpressible happiness will be given us only as the recompense of our virtues; we must therefore render ourselves worthy of it,—we must merit it. Alas! if of ourselves we are incapable of performing the least meritorious action; if we are incapable even of

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\* 1 St. Peter, i : 3, 4.



conceiving a thought pleasing in the sight of God, how will we be able to gain heaven? My Brethren, "It is good to confide in the Lord;"\* for "every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of vicissitude."† He knows our weakness, and He will make us strong; our unworthiness, and He will render us worthy. The all-powerful aid of His grace is guaranteed to us; His hand raises us up, if our hearts give away to compunction; His goodness pardons us, if, having had the misfortune to fall into sin, we return to Him with tears of repentance. Yes, our God himself will render us worthy of that happiness which He promises; and, as the royal prophet says, "the Lord will give to us grace and glory;" He will be our strength on earth, "and our reward exceedingly great in heaven."

Heaven and its graces! to attain them, let us hope for them, let us expect them, without ever doubting, without ever wavering. "Let your hope," says St. Augustine, "be as certain and confident as if you already possessed the blessings you expect." For, in the words of the Apostle, "it is impossible for God to lie; we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge, to hold fast the Hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm."‡ We must Hope with the utmost confidence. Why? Because it is God himself who has promised the blessings for which we Hope. No doubt, you have too much reason to mistrust the word and promises of man, for he has too often deceived you; but God is "not like man, He lieth not, deceiveth not." The Lord our God, is truth itself, and nothing but the words of truth can ever issue from His mouth. He is infinitely just and good; He will, therefore, be ever faithful to the promises which He has made us. He is all-powerful; He can, therefore, always accomplish His designs,—He can grant every thing that He has promised; and also, as St. Paul says, "God meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath."§ Our Hope rests on the word of God; it must therefore be firm, it must be unshaken; for not only the word of God serves as its immovable basis, but it is likewise supported on the merits of our

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\* Psalms, cxvii: 8. † St. James, i: 17. ‡ Hebrews, vi: 18, 19. § Hebrews, vi: 17.

Lord Jesus Christ. These merits are infinite ; they are sufficient to obtain for us every thing necessary for our salvation. The price of all the graces we pray for has been paid in advance, and God, who accepted the ransom, has promised to grant us every thing we ask through the merits of His well beloved Son. "O man!" says St. Augustine, "what is it God has promised you? That you would live eternally. What pledge has He given you? He died for you. We have therefore the blood of Jesus Christ,—we have His death: God has already done more than remains to be done, and His gifts surpass His promises. Mortal man will live forever, since an immortal God has deigned to die for him." If, enemies as we were, we have been reconciled with God by the death of His only Son, with much greater reason, now that we are reconciled, may we hope to be saved through the life of this same Son, crucified and risen for us! This was the thought which induced the Apostle St. Paul, to say to us: "We have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities; . . . let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid to attain heaven,"\* the end of all our hopes.

Yes, my God, Thou hast promised to aid us with the assistance of Thy grace, to pardon our sins, to give us a place in the habitation of the blessed saints of heaven! God desires, my Brethren, that we should never cease to Hope for these great blessings,—to sigh after that happiness which He has promised us; but He also, without doubt, wishes that we should never lose sight of the condition to which He has attached the fulfillment of these magnificent promises. What is this condition? That you consecrate yourselves, sincerely and generously, to His service; that you place no obstacles to His blessings and graces; that you faithfully fulfill His divine commandments. "God created you," says St. Augustine, "without your aid, but He will not save you without your coöperation." On your part you must do every thing in your power to accomplish the holy will of God, during your pilgrimage on earth; for, to obtain eternal life, says our Saviour, it is necessary to keep the commandments. Is not this right, my Beloved Friends? To acquire a fortune, what cares, what hardships, what labors do you not under-

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\* Hebrews, iv: 15, 16.

go? And if you succeed in obtaining it,—what have you? Nothing; since you must leave all at your entrance into the tomb. But once in possession of the goods which God promises you, you will possess them for everlasting ages. Oh, no; do not think you do too much in consecrating all your efforts, your mind, your heart, your soul and your body, to obtain the riches of eternity. If you get them at such a trifling cost, you have them for nothing. Nevertheless, till this day, we have always preferred the deceitful goods of this world: we have desired and coveted them; we did every thing to acquire them, as if they could render us happy; as if we were to live always on earth. “Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee!”\* Far more wise and prudent, the true Christian loves to consider himself as a traveller, directing his steps to a better country than that of this world. He preserves in his heart the love of the unutterable riches which God has prepared for His elect in another life. The Hope which he cherishes in his soul of one day enjoying this blessed immortality, prevents him from attaching himself to earthly goods,—leads him to despise the false and guilty pleasures of this world, and assists him to resist temptations with courage, and support afflictions with patience. This expectation of eternal goods, which consoles him in his sorrows, is a defence to him alike against the dangers of adversity and the seductions of prosperity. He knows that Christian patience will be crowned with glory in heaven; he knows that the goods of this world are only shining dust, and he permits not his heart to be sullied by their love. He relishes the things which are above; as the Apostle says: these are what he loves,—these he desires,—Hopes for. This Hope is laid up in his heart, and he daily prays God to strengthen it; hence the prayer which we call the act of Hope, is often on his lips. Frequently recite that beautiful prayer, that your Hope may be perfected, and elevated to the highest degree, that you may be detached from this world, to aspire with greater ardor after the possession of the eternal treasures and delights of heaven.—AMEN.

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\* St. Luke, xii: 20.



## SERMON XXVIII.

### ON PRAYER IN GENERAL.

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“Lord, teach us to pray.”—ST. LUKE, xi : 1.

WE ought to expect from the paternal bounty of God, all graces and blessings conducive to our happiness in this world and the world to come. But what practical proof can we furnish that we really possess this sublime virtue of hope, and that we look with certainty for what God has promised? The proof, my Brethren, is that we Pray to God,—that we invoke Him in our wants, and implore His aid and assistance. The poor man makes his appeal only to him from whose hand he expects an alms; so we would not direct our Prayers to God, we would not ask His graces, did we not hope to obtain them from His bounty. We Pray, therefore we hope. This brings me to speak to you now of Prayer.

What is Prayer? How ought we to Pray? This is what we all wish to learn, taught by the example of the Apostles, because we all know that in the great affair of salvation, Prayer is of the utmost importance. In fact, the prophet Joel reduces the whole science of salvation to the duty of Praying well; he says: “Every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved;” \* that is, “he who knows how to Pray well, knows how to live well,” says St. Augustine, “and he who knows how to live well, has nothing more to learn; he excels in the most important, the most necessary science, the science which makes saints, the science of salvation.” What, therefore, is Prayer? To Pray, is not to run over a prayer-book in a hasty manner, without attention or devotion; neither is it to recite the Our Father and the Hail Mary without piety and without affection. There is no Prayer when the heart is silent. Prayer is either the praise of God, or the expression of our

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\* Joel, ii : 32.

own wants and miseries. "It is the elevation of the soul to God," an elevation which has for its aim to render to God the homage of adoration and thanksgiving which are due to Him, as our Sovereign Master and our Magnificent Benefactor. "Prayer is the acknowledgment which we make of our nothingness," our misery, our frailty, and it places in the bosom of God, as in the bosom of a Father, all our troubles, and all our sorrows. Prayer is a *conversation* which we, though but dust and ashes, hold face to face, heart to heart with God; and, in this conversation we deplore our miseries and weaknesses, and we implore the divine Mercies in our behalf. Prayer is an utterance of the *desires* of our soul and our heart; it is the love, the desire of true goods. It is the heart which must Pray; but if the heart be without desire, though your lips may speak, your Prayer will be but an empty sound. Prayer therefore is to praise, to bless, to thank, and to implore the Lord.

Is Prayer necessary? Jesus Christ and the saints will answer this question. "Without me," says our divine Lord, "you can do nothing." St. Augustine remarks that Jesus Christ does not say: without me you can do nothing great, nothing heroic; for, to attain heaven, it is not necessary to perform great and heroic deeds; but He says absolutely: "Without me, you can do nothing." Abandoned to yourselves,—left to your own natural weakness, what could you do against the unruly passions of your heart? Nothing, my Brethren. Grace is necessary for you, before you can conceive even the first thought of doing good,—necessary, before you can have even the weakest desire of salvation. Without grace, no salvation, and ordinarily speaking, without Prayer, no grace. Grace will be given, but it will be to him who will ask for it; it will be opened, but for him who will have knocked. Hence our divine Saviour warns us, "that we ought always to Pray;"\* "watch ye, and Pray, that ye enter not into temptation."† Hence too, the Apostle tells us that, we must call upon the name of God, "by all Prayer and supplication, Praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication."‡ God is master of all His gifts, and in quality of master, He has the right to dispose of them on whatever conditions He pleases. Now, it is His will, that

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\* St. Luke, xviii: 1.    † St. Matthew, xxvi: 41.    ‡ Ephesians, vi: 18.

Prayer should be one of these conditions. All therefore,—the just and the unjust, must Pray, “because,” says St. Augustine, “graces which are so precious, so important, as to lead to eternal salvation, well deserve that we should ask them, without ever being disheartened.” How necessary Prayer is. How useful.

We belong to a God, who wishes and who is able to give us every thing necessary for us; and at what price? Come, ye poor, come without gold and without silver; come, ye sinners, come without merits, come in spite of your unworthiness; “ask and you shall receive;” place no limits to your requests, for God places none to His gifts. Pray, and in your troubles you will be consoled,—in your temptations you will be fortified. Pray, and you can avoid sin, and will find yourselves strong enough to practice virtue. St. Chrysostom says: “Prayer is an anchor of safety for every one in danger of suffering shipwreck, an immense treasure of riches for him who is poor, a most efficacious remedy for him who is sick, a preservative for all who wish to remain in health.”

“If we do not Pray, we are inexcusable,” says St. Alphonsus de Liguori, “for the grace of Prayer is given to every body. God gives to all the grace of Prayer, that all might obtain assistance, even abundant assistance, to keep his holy law, and persevere in the practice of it till death. If we are not saved, it will be entirely our own fault, and solely because we have not Prayed.” Ask, and you may be sure you will receive; it is Jesus Christ who promises this to you, and who even promises it with an oath: “Amen, amen, I say to you; whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, will be given unto you,” grace to do good,—assistance to avoid evil.

But when must we Pray? Our divine Saviour and His Apostles command us to Pray without ceasing, and not to grow faint, because our Prayers, to be commensurate with our wants, should be continual. It is a precept which we can not elude, so precise are the words of Jesus Christ. But, is not the fulfillment of this precept an impossibility? My Brethren, the Lord does not require that you should be the whole day and night reciting Prayers; He even wishes you to confine your Prayers to a few words, and that you be very careful not to neglect the duties of your state, to consecrate all your time to the holy exercise of Prayer. But does He not enjoin us to Pray unceasingly? He does. But what He means is, that the spirit of



piety and devotion should never depart from your hearts,—that you never cease loving God, observing His laws, and that you should ever be found faithfully fulfilling the duties of your vocation. St. Augustine says to us: “In every thing you do, seek the holy will of God; attend to your business; fulfill all the obligations of your state of life; labor with the intention of pleasing God,—offering to Him every day of your life; and, so doing, you will accomplish the precept of Jesus Christ,—you will Pray without ceasing.”

Pray when temptation comes upon you, for then you need to be strengthened. “Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,”\* said our divine Redeemer to His disciples. He who does not Pray is vanquished. Pray; God will combat with you, and your triumph is certain. All the powers of hell can not overcome him whom God supports.

Pray when affliction and adversity come upon you. The Holy Ghost says to us: “Is any of you sad? let him Pray;”† you will receive aid and consolation, and “your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”‡

Pray before meals. Invoke the blessing of God on the nourishment you are about to take, that it may benefit your body,—that all temptation of sensuality may be removed from you,—that you may not abandon yourselves to any excess in eating or drinking, and that you may by this very act, acquire merit before God. Yes, before your meals, implore the bounty of God, who opens His hands, and every creature is filled with proofs of His liberality. After your meals, return thanks to the Lord: it is His paternal solicitude that provided for your subsistence, as it provided for the little birds of the air. The bread which is given you to eat, you have received from His providence; prove your gratitude then, by returning thanks to your heavenly Father for His goodness.

Pray every morning and evening. Why in the morning? Because God has watched over you during the night, and kept you in health and strength. You should Pray in the morning, because you ought to offer and consecrate to God all your labor, your occupations, your thoughts, your troubles, your toils, and all your actions. You should Pray in the morning, so that God may shower

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\* St. Matthew, xxvi: 41. † St. James, v: 13. ‡ St. John, xvi: 20.

down His graces upon you, and assist you to walk during the day in the brightness of His holy light, in such a manner that you may avoid evil and do good.

You ought to pray in the evening. Why so? Because it is your duty to return thanks to Providence, for the benefits He has heaped upon you during the day, now come to a close; because you ought to ask mercy and pardon for the many faults you have committed during the day. Finally, you ought to pray every evening, that God may take care of you during the night, and grant you a sound and a peaceful repose.

We all easily admit, my Brethren, that we at all times stand in need of the assistance of God; we need His assistance to preserve our lives to labor in a Christian-like manner, to practice virtue, to escape the misfortunes to which we are daily and constantly exposed. We should then as readily admit the necessity in which we are placed of having recourse to God every morning and every night; and yet, not small is the number of those, who, some through the pressure of their business and worldly affairs, others through levity and dissipation; one class through discouragement and disgust; another through pure indolence and shameful sloth, neglect without scruple their morning and evening Prayers, rise up and lie down like the beasts of the field, without one thought on the God that made them. Alas! these pretended disciples of Jesus Christ will soon have neither faith nor religion, for faith and religion can not be preserved without exercise, and can not be exercised without Prayer.

To be consoled and strengthened in our troubles, to escape the evils which threaten our body and our soul, every day and every hour of our life, we must pray. To preserve our heart and soul in peace and tranquillity, to be happy, we must pray. We must pray, for it is from God that every perfect gift comes. Have then a great esteem for Prayer. Every day elevate your hearts toward God your Father, and full of a holy confidence in His goodness and His love, ask from Him assistance, strength, patience and courage. If you preserve in your hearts the holy intention of doing all for His glory and the salvation of souls, be you sure, that God on His part, will hear and grant your Prayers and supplications, for He desires our happiness in this world and in the world to come.—AMEN.

## SERMON XXIX.

## CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

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“Ask, and you shall receive.”—ST. JOHN, xvi: 24.

PRAYER is necessary ; it is the means ordained by God to obtain from His goodness the graces and the assistance of which we stand in need. Prayer is very efficacious ; it obtains from God every thing requisite for our happiness in this world, and in the world to come, since the Saviour has said to us : whatever you shall ask my heavenly Father in my name, He will give unto you. They who care little for Prayer, care little for their salvation. Yet, my Brethren, the Lord God does not hear every Prayer. To render our supplications acceptable in His sight, they must be accompanied with true sorrow for our sins ; and they must also be offered with recollection and confidence. Let us carefully consider these Conditions of well made Prayer.

The first disposition for praying well, is sorrow for the faults which we have committed. “We are all sinners, and if any one says he is without sin, the truth is not in him,” says the Holy Ghost. But is not our condition as sinners an obstacle to the efficacy of Prayer ? In the state of sin, can we pray, and pray even through Jesus Christ ? Yes, if this Prayer proceeds, if not from a will already determined, if not from a resolution already formed to forsake sin, at least from a heart sincerely deploring its attachment to sin, asking strength to break asunder its chains, and suffering because it is not repentant enough. But it is impossible to offer an acceptable Prayer,—and consequently your Prayer will be without effect, if you have neither shame nor regret for your sins ; if, far from having recourse to Jesus Christ, to beg Him for aid to break the bonds that bind you to sin, you for months and years resist His grace, so sweetly and so patiently pressing you to abandon the ways of iniquity. How indeed can God hear your Prayers and



grant your desires, while you are determined to persevere in sin, which excites His indignation ; while you continue to violate His commandments, to despise His graces, and trample under foot His divine will ? The most indulgent of fathers would refuse to comply with the desires of an ungrateful son, who would continually insult and outrage him. He would at least require, that the guilty offender should humble himself, and acknowledge his fault, before his paternal hand would be opened to shower upon him his favors anew ;—this would be just,—who can doubt it ? And you, my dear Brethren, Pray, and yet continue to love sin ; you Pray, and sin still rules as master in your hearts ; do not then expect that God will hear you. God rejects the Prayer which you address to Him from your mouth, and not from your heart. He tells us : “When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away my eyes from you ; and when you multiply Prayer, I will not hear,”\* for your hands are full of iniquities.

If you wish that God would hear your Prayers, avoid anger and dissension. “I will,” says St. Paul, “therefore, that men Pray in every place, lifting up pure hands, without anger and strife.”†

If you wish that God would hear your Prayers, be not implacable toward those who have injured you. “When you shall stand to Pray,” says our divine Lord, “forgive, if you have any thing against any man ; that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins.”‡ Again, he says, “if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins.”§

If you wish that God would hear your Prayers, cease to be hard-hearted toward the unfortunate. “He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard.”||

If you wish that God would hear your Prayers, renounce pride, which so much displeases Him. You know that the Holy Ghost has said : “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”¶

Take care that the voice of the sins which you have committed, cry not louder than the voice of your Prayers. Hardened in crime, you Pray, and your Prayer is not heard, for Jesus Christ Prays not

\* Isaias, i : 15.

† 1 Timothy, ii : 8.

‡ St. Mark, xi : 25.

§ St. Matthew, vi : 15.

|| Proverbs, xxi : 13.

¶ St. James, iv : 6.

with you. "He is indeed the Advocate of sinners," says St. Augustine, "but He will never be the advocate of sin." God will hear you, if you commence by humbling yourselves in His presence, by asking forgiveness of Him, by saying to Him: "Lord, be thou merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." \* Let this cry be sincere, and really spring from your heart, and, though you have committed the most heinous crimes, be assured that God will lend a propitious ear to your petition.

The second disposition for Praying well, is recollection. What is Prayer? It is a conversation with God. In Prayer, the soul is, as it were, admitted and introduced into the sanctuary of the Lord; it lays before Him its wants, makes known its temptations, and its infirmities; it honors Him, glorifies Him, adores Him, thanks Him, and implores His mercies. Such an act of religion ought not to be a mere outward practice. On the contrary, Prayer demands all the application and earnestness of our minds and hearts, and, when our soul Prays, every human and profane object should disappear from our mind. No, it is not lawful, to let our minds be occupied with foreign and useless thoughts, when we are speaking to the Lord, our God. Our Prayers should spring from the heart, and what we ask from the Almighty, should be the object present to our thoughts.

You would consider yourself slighted and insulted, if any one coming to transact some important business with you, instead of attending to what he was saying, would laugh, talk and joke with others at the very same time. What then must God think of us, and how great is the injury we offer His majesty, when we entreat Him and praise Him with our mouths,—when we offer Him a lip-service, while our hearts are far from Him. To whom do you speak in Prayer? To that God, who, with one hand, measures the waters of the deep, and with the other supports the entire weight of the heavens; before whose glance mountains melt away, and all nations become as if they were not. And what do you ask? Ah! did you think seriously on it, you would soon find the deepest recollection spring up in your hearts. In fact, you ask the possession of God himself, the heritage of glory, and an eternity of happiness: you can ask nothing greater, and yet in this action so holy and so

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\* Psalms, xl : 5.

sublime, you manifest only coldness and indifference. How then can you expect that God will hear you?

But is it always a sin to be distracted in Prayer? No, my Brethren. If these distractions are not voluntary, if they displease you, if you do all that is in your power to prevent them, far from injuring your Prayers, they become themselves a Prayer, as St. Augustine tells us. They are occasions for acquiring merit, whether they come directly from God, who wishes to try you, or from the devil, who is jealous of the graces which you receive to strengthen you against his evil suggestions. Take care to profit by these ever salutary occasions.

But be careful also that these distractions be not willful, that you do not yield to them, that you do not seek them, or that you neglect to reject them when they occur. If they be the effect of your will, or of your negligence, the Holy Ghost tells you that your very Prayer is changed into sin, and by no means deserves to be heard. What do I say: you yourselves do not desire that it should be heard. In truth says St. Cyprian: "How does it appear that you ardently wish that God should hear you, when you do not hear yourselves?" I beseech you then, my Brethren, and you know how sincerely I desire your salvation and your happiness, to consider, that when you pray, you have the honor and glory of speaking to the sovereign Master of heaven and earth. While you pray, think of God, think of what you ask Him, and ask with confidence, which is the last disposition of praying well.

Be assured, my Brethren, that the Lord will hear your Prayer, if what you ask can contribute to His glory, to the sanctification and salvation of your own soul. The Apostle St. James forbids us to doubt and hesitate: he says to us: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, that is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."\* Why would you doubt? You are supported by the promise of God himself: "Ask," He says, "and you shall receive." Why would you hesitate?

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\* St. James, i: 5, 6, 7.



It is the Holy Ghost who prays in us; it is the Son of God who prays for us, He who died, rose again and sitteth at the right hand of His Father. We are indeed unworthy of obtaining any thing by ourselves; but let us begin our Prayer by the acknowledgment of our weakness, of our unworthiness, and immediately two persons of the most adorable Trinity will come to our assistance: the Son of God, who is the Just One, is our Advocate and the propitiation for our sins;\* and the Holy Ghost, whom we have received, and in whom we cry; Father, Father!† Hence the Apostle exhorts us to approach the throne of grace with the utmost confidence.

But sometimes our Prayers are not granted, and St. Augustine rejoices at it; because the refusal is for our advantage. God refuses our request, to give us something better; He prefers rather to resist us than gratify desires which would have, perhaps, led us astray. Do not murmur then, my Christian Friends, if God is slow in granting your petition; submit to the Divine will, and avoid that language which we so often hear in the world: "It is no use for me to pray; I obtain nothing, neither the removal of this cross which is so heavy, nor the cure of that disease which afflicts and ruins me." But, my dear Brethren, if hitherto your Prayer has not been granted, it is because you did not pray well,—you did not ask with proper dispositions. Beside, would what you asked have been advantageous to your immortal soul, would it have contributed to your eternal salvation? Perhaps, though you considered it a blessing, it would have filled your heart with vanity and pride; and free from the cross and from trouble, you would perhaps forget your God and the salvation of your soul. God wishes to avert from you so great a calamity. It may be, that restored to perfect health and strength, you would abandon yourselves to the indulgence of your passions, and plunge into every species of vice. God wishes to prevent you from falling into so great a misfortune. Return thanks then to the Lord, who loves you much more than you love yourself. But, you tell me that what you request is good and salutary for you, and yet God is slow in granting your desires: My dear child, if God does not satisfy your wishes in the very commencement, it is to make you feel the value of His favors, to

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\* 1 St. John, ii: 1, 2.

† Romans, viii: 15.

prove your faith, to exercise your patience, to render you more humble, more attentive, more watchful over yourself. No, do not murmur; have confidence, and continue to pray as you ought, and God will grant your request in his own good time; for He wishes your happiness both in this world and the world to come.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXX.

### FIRST WORDS OF THE PATER NOSTER.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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“You, therefore, shall pray in this manner: Our Father, who art in heaven.”—  
ST. MATTHEW, vi: 9.

PRAYER, to be agreeable to God and profitable to him who prays, must come from a heart penetrated with sorrow at sight of its own unworthiness, and must be made with recollection, accompanied with a great confidence in God. But what are we allowed to ask of the Lord? My Brethren, God himself places upon our lips the petitions which we ought to address to Him, and we find them admirably expressed in the Lord's Prayer. This beautiful Prayer teaches us both the duties which we have to fulfill, and the desires which we ought to form: it is necessary, therefore, that I should explain it to you, in all its parts. I intend doing so with the divine grace, and to-day I will tell you the meaning of the first words of the Lord's Prayer: “Our Father, who art in heaven.”

Prayer made in the name of Jesus Christ and with the necessary conditions, is always pleasing to God and useful to the soul. But, my Brethren, can we pray better, in the name of our Saviour, than when we have on our lips the Prayer which He himself composed? The Lord's Prayer comes from the Son of God himself. There is no Prayer more dear to the heart of God; there is none more perfect, none more salutary, none which rises with greater facility toward heaven, since from heaven it descended.

It is true, my Brethren, we can use other forms, and employ other expressions, when we speak to God ; but it is not lawful for us to address to Him petitions which are not contained in the Lord's Prayer. Why so ? Because it contains all that is necessary ; if we stood in need of any thing else, our divine Saviour would most assuredly have expressed it in the Prayer which He taught us. Would not asking more be as if you were to say to the Son of God : " I know better than you what I need and what is useful and necessary for me ? " No, no, my dear child, you do not know better than the Incarnate Word of God, what you ought to ask from heaven. Listen, then, to Jesus Christ, and say, from the bottom of your heart, His divine Prayer : " Our Father, who art in heaven. "

The first word that the Son of God teaches us to pronounce, is the sweet name of *Father*. Do you desire to obtain any favor from the great ones of this world ? You take care to begin your petition by bestowing upon them the name and titles which they value and cherish most. In like manner, according to the order of Jesus Christ, when we pray to God, we forget, in a manner, all the attributes which place Him at such an immense distance from us, and which can only inspire us with sentiments of fear, and all, just and unjust, give to the God of glory and majesty the endearing name of Father, because it is by this name, above all others, signifying as it does tenderness and compassion, that He wishes to be known. Does not the Apostle St. Paul tell us that our God is the source of all paternity, that is to say, of all goodness ? Does not our Lord delight to call himself " the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation ? " O ! yes, the name of Father is well suited to the God who created, redeemed, and by His providence, preserves us.

We are the children of God, " we are the race of God, " as the Spirit of Truth declares, and it is through " Him we live, move and have our being. " \* He created us to His own image and likeness, a favor which He has not granted to other beings ; hence He desires that the Sacred Scriptures call Him the Father of all men, and particularly of the faithful. Our heavenly Father continually watches over us, and with so much care that a hair cannot fall from our head without His permission, and that, every day, His bountiful

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\* Acts, xvii : 28.



providence sends us the bread which we need, to support our lives. He bears our names written in His hand, and never forsakes us ; so much so, that this God of goodness wills that a prince of heaven,—an angel, should ever attend at our side and keep continual watch over us.

We are the children of God, and we “have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry : Abba, Father.”\* We were sinners,—we were children of wrath, and heaven was closed against us ; but God has paid our ransom. See, therefore, what love God, the Father, has testified unto us, that we might have the name of the children of God, and which, in reality, we possess.

Behold, how the well-beloved Son of God is made flesh, takes upon Himself our iniquities, and humbles Himself, becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross, that He might redeem us,—that He might save us ; that we might become the children of God, His brothers, and the co-heirs of His glory. Well may I then address you in those beautiful words of the Apostle St. John : “ Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God : and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him : because we shall see Him as He is.” †

It was not without the most charitable design, that our divine Lord wished us to commence our Prayer by the words “ Our Father.” He wished by this sweet name to awaken in our hearts the love we should ever bear to God, because He is our Father. And He would also by it fill our souls with the firmest confidence in His bounty. In fact, my Brethren, what is there that God will not give to those who have recourse to Him, since before they asked it, He gave them the grace of being His children ? He grants us then the liberty of approaching Him, as children approach their father ; of asking from Him whatever we desire, for it is almost out of His power any longer to refuse us any thing. “ If you then, being evil,” says our divine Lord, “ know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him.” ‡

Jesus Christ did not teach us to say *my Father*, but *Our Father* ; Why so ? To excite charity among men, and to teach us that we

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\* Romans, viii : 15.    † 1 St. John, iii : 2.    ‡ St. Matthew, vii : 11.

should desire as well the happiness and the progress in virtue of others, as our own, and should ask the blessings of God for them, as well as for ourselves. God willingly hears a Christian who prays not only for himself, but for others also. Jesus Christ wishes that we should say, *Our Father*; to remind us that we are all brethren, and that there is but one Father of us all, who is in heaven;\* it is to teach us to renounce our pride and self-love, which prompt us to prefer ourselves to others; it is to destroy among us every seed of hatred and division, and that we might all live together in the unity of faith, and bond of peace. The first Christians well understood what was meant by the words, *Our Father*; seeing them so intimately united, men exclaimed with astonishment: "Behold how they love one another."

God is in all places by *His immensity*; why then does our Saviour wish that we should say, "Our Father, who art in heaven?" Because it is in heaven that God has established His throne; there He manifests His majesty and His glory to the elect; there He multiplies the effusions of His liberality, and inundates with happiness the souls of His saints. Our loving Lord wished also to awaken our faith and fortify our hope, by placing before us the ravishing object which alone can satisfy the infinite desires of our heart,—the abode of the elert,—where our reward exceedingly great awaits us, toward which we should elevate our thoughts and our desires, and which we must labor to attain. Yes, my Brethren, when we pray to our Father who is in heaven, let us raise up our thoughts above the things of earth. Let us avoid Praying only for temporal advantages, often dangerous to our salvation, while our heavenly Father invites us to ask for eternal blessings. God loves you, for He is your Father; He knows your wants,—He knows what is necessary for your present and future happiness, and what it will serve you to attain: have confidence; He will grant you temporal blessings, but it will be when you seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, then every thing else will be added unto you. My dear Brethren, every time you are about to pray to God, do not fail to say within yourselves: I am now going to converse with my God, and to speak to Him of what I most need for my soul and body.

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\* St. Matthew, xxiii : 9.

I will speak to my God who is in heaven, who permits me to call Him my Father,—to my God, who loves me as an only child, who watches over me every day, and who overshadows me with His paternal care. He knows my wants, but He wishes me to pray to Him, and I ought to do so with all the confidence of a child speaking to its father. Yes, my Brethren, this is the way in which you must pray to your Father, who is in heaven. Repeat often the Prayer which our Lord taught you, and be assured that your God, your Father, will favorably receive your Prayers; He will grant your requests, and give you grace to attain happiness here and hereafter.—Amen.

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## SERMON XXXI.

### FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER.—(CONTINUED.)

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“Not to us, O Lord, not to us ; but to Thy name give glory.”—PSALMS, cxiii : 1.

THE Lord's Prayer is the best Prayer we can address to God, for it has been taught us by the Son of God himself. It begins by these beautiful words: “Our Father, who art in heaven.” This endearing name of *Father*, which God permits us to give Him, reveals to us His immense goodness and His boundless charity. It teaches us that the Lord yields to our entreaties, that He pardons our sins, and that, by a most glorious adoption, He has chosen us as His children, and wills that His well-beloved Son should call us his *brethren*. A God so perfect ought to be adored from the bottom of our hearts: a God so good, so merciful, ought to be loved with the liveliest and most intense love: hence we must ardently desire and fervently pray that “His name may be hallowed.” Such is the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, which I propose making the subject of my instruction to you to-day. The Lord's Prayer con-



tains seven petitions, which includes every thing we ought to ask of God, whether it be for His glory, or our own spiritual or temporal interests. The three first petitions relate to God, and the four last refer to ourselves.

In the three first, we ask of God that His name may be sanctified, that He may reign over us, and that His holy will may be accomplished. By putting these petitions in the beginning of His Prayer, our divine Saviour would remind us of the main end of Prayer, which is to honor God; and, as good children, who love their father more than themselves, we occupy ourselves first about His interests, before we think of taking care of our own.

In the four other petitions, we lay bare our wants before the Almighty: we ask from Him food for soul and body,—the necessities of life; we beg of Him to grant us the pardon of our sins, to help us to overcome temptation, to support our weakness, and to deliver us from all evils, both in this life and in the life to come. Such is the plan of this divine Prayer, which contains every thing that the most learned divines, or the holiest saints can pray for. It is a fund which cannot be exhausted. See if it be not so, by a consideration of what is contained in the first petition: "Hallowed be Thy name."

Men desire and seek only those things which they do not already possess, but which they feel to be wanting to them. Now, the divine Nature is wanting in nothing; God possesses in himself every imaginable perfection, and in an infinite degree. He can receive nothing in time which He has not had from all eternity; He is susceptible neither of improvement nor increase, since He is infinite and perfect, under all respects. The name of God marks His essence, that is to say, God himself,—all that He is,—His whole being,—all His divine attributes and perfections; in so much, that this name is infinitely holy and immutable. What then do we ask by this first petition of the Lord's Prayer,—"Hallowed be Thy name?" Do we pray that God would become still more holy? This would be to offer an insult to God, who is holiness itself, and whose perfections are infinite. What we ask of God for himself regards neither His perfections, nor His nature, but only His external glory: "Hallowed be Thy name!" Behold the first desire of a good son: he wishes that his father may be known, loved, cherished and esteemed

throughout the whole world. Such is the wish, such is the desire, my Brethren, which you form at the commencement of your Prayer: you testify to your heavenly Father the ardent desire you have of seeing Him, who is worthy of all glory, revered, served, glorified and adored by the whole universe; you ask that His name, that is to say, that himself, may be blessed and extolled by all mankind; you pray that to yourself God would grant every necessary grace, by which you too may be able to contribute to the glory of your Father and render to Him your share of fitting homage, by advancing continually in the practice of every good work. Such is the first petition which we make to God, after acknowledging Him as our Father; for the desire that God may be blessed is essential to a Christian, and God's glory should be his first and principal object, the one which should occupy the first place in his heart, as St. Chrysostom tells us.

To make you understand this petition more perfectly, you must know, that although God is infinitely holy, nevertheless His holiness is very far from being acknowledged by the whole world. To be convinced of this, let us glance over the globe, and see what kind of people inhabit it. We can not be ignorant that there are yet entire nations who have not the happiness of knowing the true God; who do not honor nor adore Him. Such are the nations, who to this very day, are buried in the darkness of infidelity and idolatry. Many know the true God, but they do not honor Him as He wishes to be honored; they do not render to Him the homage of a pure faith and a perfect worship: such are heretics and schismatics. We see many others who, though reared in the true Church, and believing the word of God, nevertheless do not glorify His name, for they lead evil lives; these are wicked Catholics. Well then, my Brethren, whenever we repeat this petition: "Hallowed be Thy name," we beg of God, we beseech Him, that of His mercy He would shed the light of faith upon the minds of those poor pagan nations, and lead them from the darkness of infidelity, to this fold of Jesus Christ. We entreat Him to bring back to the bosom of the true Church, all heretics and schismatics; we implore Him to touch the hearts of sinners by His grace, and thereby lead them to a true and lasting conversion,—to a sincere repentance; and, in fine, we supplicate Him to impress us all with the salutary conviction, that

there is nothing so dreadful as sin, nothing so deplorable as the loss of His grace. This is what we ask by these words: "Hallowed be Thy name." We pray that the hearts of all men may be elevated to God,—that they may be closely united with Him, and present to Him a pure, a holy, and an acceptable worship, such as the angels and the saints offer in the kingdom of heaven.

You must remark that when you ask that the name of your heavenly Father may be hallowed, you acknowledge your obligation of doing all in your power to have this adorable name worthily praised and honored by all around you. You engage yourselves to perform your work, to discharge your duties, to conduct your affairs to the greater honor and glory of God. You ought, therefore, by good advice and wholesome instruction, endeavor to bring up your children, and all those under your charge, in the love and practice of Christian virtue. You should say nothing, you should do nothing, you should permit nothing that would be displeasing to God. You ought to prevent evil everywhere, when it be in your power to do so. You should in a Christian spirit oppose all such as curse or swear or blaspheme,—and should not permit your children or servants or work people to associate with them. You should on all occasions give good example. You should, in fine, devote yourselves to fulfilling these words of our Saviour: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."\* Do we, my brethren, act thus? Alas! your conduct is a flagrant contradiction to your professions and your prayers. Examine, and judge for yourselves; every day you pray, "Hallowed be Thy name," that God may be known, honored, loved, and served by the whole world; and yet every day you insult the Lord; every day your sinful tongues utter imprecations and blasphemies; every day you abandon your hearts to the slavery of sin. There is no day on which you do not say, let thy name, O Lord! *be hallowed*, and yet you do not what you can and ought to do, to extend God's glory. It is through your fault, in fact, that your children and domestics remain in culpable ignorance of the things of God,—unacquainted with the sacred truths of religion; nay, perhaps, even you have sent these children to wicked

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\* St. Matthew, v: 16.



schools, and given them in charge to impious teachers, who mold their tender minds to vice and infidelity. You who act thus, fail in one of your most essential duties ; with you the Lord is not known, nor loved, nor served.

But is it not just that our divine Lord should ordain us to ask, in the first place, that the name of our heavenly Father be hallowed, and for grace, that we may contribute to extend the glory of God, and procure for Him the adoration and homage of every heart ? Is not our God, Supreme Master, and has He not created all things for His own glory, for himself ? Yes, children of God, if your hearts are in the right place, you will seek above all things the glory of your Father, who is in heaven, and you will do all that you can, so that on earth, as far as possible, the name of the Lord may be blessed, honored, praised, and hallowed, by every tongue and by every heart. If you are the true children of God, you will rejoice when you behold virtuous men leading others in the paths of virtue, teaching them to glorify the name of the Lord. If you are the true children of God, your hearts will be oppressed with sorrow, when you see the wicked, by bad example, leading others into vice and sin, and blaspheming the name of the Most High. Take care, my Brethren, take care, that you be not so ungrateful toward God, as to regard with an equal eye, good and evil. And, nevertheless, how many a time have you not seemingly said : what matters it to me whether God be praised and honored, or whether He be despised and insulted by others ? If you have not at heart the salvation of men, you take no interest whatever in the glory of God ; and may we not well suppose that you are guilty of deceit, when you dare say to the Almighty, "Hallowed be Thy name ?" But do you even honor God yourselves ? You pray ; but do you avoid sin ? I must tell you, my Brethren, if you keep in your hearts the love of sin, the desire and the will of violating the holy law of God, you bless not, you praise not, but you outrage the Lord, when you say to Him : "Hallowed be Thy name." Be assured, God will not condescend to hear you, He will despise your petition, you who act in this manner, exhibiting in your conduct the very contrary of what you ask in your prayers. From this very moment, my Brethren, let us renounce every thing that God prohibits ; let us abandon the ways of sin ; let us love to labor for the

honor and the glory of God ; let us seek before all things the kingdom of heaven ; that is to say, *God himself*, and the holiness which conducts us to Him, and then may we say with truth : Hallowed be Thy name. God will then hear us, He will be sanctified in us, and around us, and His benediction will become our lot, for this world and for the world to come.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXII.

SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.—(CONTINUED.)

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“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—*St. MATTHEW*, vi: 10.

IN the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, we desire that the Lord our God, may be known, loved, honored and served throughout the whole world, as He is known, loved, honored and served in heaven. “Hallowed be Thy name;” by addressing this Prayer to God, we, in some manner engage ourselves to walk constantly in the practice of virtue, that we may thereby contribute to the glory of God, for it is in His saints that the Lord finds His glory. This is what I explained to you in our last instruction. You listened to me with attention, and I hope with profit: I beg of you to extend to me the same good will, while I unfold to you the second and third petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

“Thy kingdom come;” such is the second petition of the Lord's Prayer. Now what do we ask by these words from the goodness of God? We ask not only one kingdom, but three kingdoms, all three most worthy of our sighs and our desires, all three presenting us the most inestimable advantages. We pray for the kingdom of the Church which our Saviour established, which He unceasingly directs, and from which He will never withdraw His aid and support. We pray for the kingdom of grace; that it

may enlighten, animate and fortify all hearts ; that it may enable them to resist temptation and overcome all the obstacles which beset the road to heaven. We pray for that kingdom which the Lord recommends us to seek *before all things*,—the kingdom of heaven, “that kingdom,” says St. Augustine, “where truth is the only king, charity the only law, and which has eternity for its duration.”

Behold, my Brethren, the great and holy things which we ask from God, by these words : “Thy kingdom come.” The Prophet Isaias says to the Church of God : “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles, spare not : lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt pass on to the right hand, and to the left ; for He that made thee shall rule over thee.”\* “The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see : all these are gathered together, they are come to thee : thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.†” It is the accomplishment of these words that we beg of God to bring about in the world. Let thy Church, O my God, be extended over the whole earth ; let the truth which Thou didst bring to mankind, shine as a brilliant light before the eyes of all, and may the nations that sit in the darkness of idolatry, and in the shadow of death, emerge from error, know and love the truth, which is the food of the mind and the life of the soul. “Thy Kingdom come ;” may nations “and kings cease to rage and devise vain things against the Lord and against His Christ,” against His Church, the guardian of the only true religion ; may heresies be extinguished, schisms vanish, incredulity die, so that there may be but one fold, and one shepherd, leading all in the way of truth to the possession of God. “Thy Kingdom come ;” may the authority of the Church of God find none but docile hearts among the disciples of Jesus Christ ; may there be no longer found in it such as confess God with their mouths, but deny Him by their actions, whose faith is dead, and over whom sin and the devil rule as masters ; may the *floor* of the House of God be completely *cleansed*, and may all, in peace, security and justice, render to God their reverence and adoration. The

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\* Isaias, liv : 2, 3, 5.

† Isaias, lx : 2, 3, 4.



triumph of religion, the propagation of the faith, and the prosperity of the Church, these are in a few words, what we ask in the first place, when we say ; "Thy kingdom come."

But, my Brethren, our wants are great and our wanderings frequent. We form good resolutions, yet rarely carry them into effect. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do."\* I must maintain a fearful struggle against the powers of darkness,—against my own flesh and against the world, and I am so weak! I will most certainly fall in the contest, unless the grace of God protect me and render me strong. But let Thy kingdom come, O my God, and I shall triumph, for in Thee who fortified me, I can do every thing. Do we then ask for the kingdom of grace by these words : "Thy kingdom come?" We do: by them we beg of God to aid us to destroy in our hearts the empire of sin, bad habits, and evil inclinations ; we ask Him to assist us to conquer our passions, that the charity of Jesus Christ may live in us, and that we may perform what He commands, that all in us and about us may breathe the good odor of Jesus Christ, that we may follow His voice and march under His divine guidance.

Finally, if we pray that the kingdom of truth may be extended over the whole earth, if we implore that the kingdom of grace and of charity may prevail in our hearts, it is that we may thereby arrive at the third kingdom, that of glory in heaven. We pray that at the hour of our death, heaven may be opened to us, and that we may have a place in the paradise of God. But the foolish virgins spoken of in the Gospel, likewise prayed to be admitted into the joy of their Lord, and this happiness was refused them. Why? Because they had not done what they should have done to have their prayer heard. We also pray that we may obtain heaven ; but will it be given to us? God promises it not to idleness and sloth, not to those who are content with saying : "Lord, Lord ;" but to those who do violence to themselves, to those who "do the will of the heavenly Father;" for He says to us : "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Hence, our blessed Lord

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\* Romans, vii : 14, 15.

was pleased that to this petition there should be immediately added another, which is the third: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The first words of our Lord when entering into the world, were these: "I came not to do my will, but the will of my Father, who sent me;" and, my Brethren, "He was obedient even to the death of the cross. We also come into this world, not to do our own will, but the ever adorable will of God. We must, therefore, do every thing which our heavenly Father requires of us; we must obey His law, and patiently carry the burden of the cross which He has placed upon our shoulders. But without the assistance of the Divine Grace, will we be strong enough to accomplish this? Alas! my Brethren, we are weak and inconstant! Therefore it was that our divine Saviour wished us to say to His heavenly Father: O my God, "let Thy will be done." You pray for strength to serve the Lord, all the days of your life, in justice and in holiness; you beg Him to incline your heart toward His holy law, and to grant you the grace to walk patiently and firmly in the paths in which His fatherly Providence saw proper to place you, despite the murmurs and complaints of the flesh,—despite the jeers and contempt of the false wisdom of the world. May this divine will be done "on earth as it is in heaven." That is to say, you ask that all men, during their whole lives, may testify by their submission to their Supreme Ruler, the same fidelity, the same zeal, the same eagerness as the angels in heaven, who manifest without constraint a full and complete confidence in God. You pray that we should all accomplish the holy will of the Lord, our God, as perfectly as the angels do in heaven, so that the earth may be to Him as pleasing a spectacle as heaven.

"Thy will be done on earth as it in heaven." You pray for grace, strength, courage and patience. Is it from your heart that you address this Prayer to the Lord? If so, you will not be unwise, says the Apostle, but you will understand what is the will of God; you will know that if your heavenly Father wishes you to suffer, it is to correct you and save you; and whatsoever affliction heaven sends you, you will not even think of complaining, but will bless the merciful hand of God, our Father, who is in heaven, and who seeks the happiness of His children.

"Thy kingdom come." Let us, my Brethren, prove that this

desire truly comes from our hearts, and let us cease opposing the establishment of the kingdom of God in our souls: let us, therefore, courageously struggle against the passions of our corrupt nature, and ever turn a deaf ear to the bad counsels and the dangerous suggestions of the world and the devil, the capital enemies of Jesus Christ. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Let us love and seek what God wills,—what God loves. But He wills that we accomplish His holy law; that renouncing ourselves, we carry our cross with patience; that we advance in the ways of perfection to which He calls us, and which conduct us to heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXIII.

FOURTH AND FIFTH PETITIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.—(CONTINUED.)

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"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."—THE LORD'S PRAYER.

IN the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, my Brethren, we ask that the holy name of God may be hallowed, that He may be known, loved, served and honored throughout the world; that His kingdom may come upon us, that the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the guardian of truth, may be propagated among all nations; that grace may reign in our hearts, and that we may all be one day received into the kingdom of God in heaven.

We now come to those petitions of this divine Prayer, which have special reference to ourselves. Be very attentive then, while I explain for you these beautiful words: "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

"O Lord," says the royal prophet, "all expect of Thee that Thou



give them food in season.”\* From our very birth, my Brethren, both our soul and our body should say to the Lord: “Give us this day our daily bread.” But what do we ask by these words? We ask every thing necessary for the maintenance of the life of the soul. The body needs material nourishment to support it; supernatural food is necessary for the soul, to preserve its spiritual life. We ask for our body food, raiment and lodging, in a word, every thing necessary for our temporal life. “Give us this day our daily bread.” We pray also for the bread of the soul. What is this bread? It is sanctifying grace, which, entering into our soul, nourishes it, fortifies it, and enables it to perform those good works, which merit for it the rewards of heaven. This bread of the soul is the word of God, which confirms the soul in the love and practice of virtue; for our Saviour has told us, “man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”† This bread of the soul is above all, the adorable Eucharist, the living bread that came down from heaven, which assists us to advance even to the mountain of God,—to heaven; for our loving Lord assures us, that he who will eat this bread shall have eternal life.

Behold, my Brethren, what is contained in these words: “Give us this day our daily bread.” You beg of God to maintain you in His grace, to make you hear attentively and willingly His vivifying word, to grant you the happiness of receiving worthily, and into a pure and spotless heart, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the inestimable pledge of eternal life. You ask from the goodness of God for bread to nourish your body, raiment to cover it, and all other things necessary to preserve its existence during your short stay in this world.

God said to Adam when he had sinned: “Cursed is the earth in thy work: with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”‡ Was the law of labor abolished by the Son of God? No. Why then does He wish that we should seek our daily bread, not in the sweat of our brow, but from God! Because it is not in our power to make the corn grow.

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\* Psalms, ciii: 27.

† St. Matthew, iv: 4.

‡ Genesis, iii: 17, 18, 19.

Unless God preserves the grain which you plant in the earth, it will be choked out by weeds, or destroyed by rain, wind, hail, heat or rust. All our efforts are useless, all our hopes are vain, when God does not bless our labor. Neither he who sows, nor he who cultivates is anything; it is God alone who gives the increase; it is God alone who multiplies the grain and makes fruitful the precious seed which your hand confided to the earth. Entreat the Lord then, to bless the work of your hands; but at the same time, avoid idleness, for God is opposed to sloth, and declares that the idle man is not worthy of the bread which he eats.

But why does our Saviour wish us to ask for bread enough only for one day? We ought to ask only for what is strictly necessary, because superfluities, beside being useless, are oftentimes dangerous. Temporal riches are most frequently accompanied by vice and disorder, by forgetfulness of God, and contempt of the goods of heaven. "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."\* We do not even ask that God would enable us to live in abundance, and enjoy good cheer like that rich man, who, as the Gospel tells us, was buried in hell. We ought to be far removed from the desire of living in abundance, as by such a life we consume what justly belongs to others,—to our indigent brethren who languish in misery, and are frequently a prey to the horrors of famine.

It is not our yearly bread, our weekly bread, but our daily bread that we ought to ask of God; for there is no day on which we do not need the aid, the assistance, and the blessings of heaven. Every day, food is necessary for our support; every day, the rich as well as the poor ought to pray for it. "Not that the rich want the necessaries of life," says St. Chrysostom, "but that their food may come to them from the hand of God, and may receive from the Almighty a salutary virtue, rendering it useful to the body and subjecting the body to the soul."

You ought to ask only your daily bread, for God wishes that you would learn how to hope for the things of to-morrow, with a loving confidence in His divine providence. Will you live till to-morrow?

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\* 1 Timothy, vi: 9.

If you do, then, as well as to-day, God will be your Father. Does it follow from this that God condemns all care for the future? Certainly not; but He does condemn that excessive anxiety about the future, which causes men to devote all their energies to acquiring the goods of this world, without any reference to the world to come. He does condemn those people who are ever lamenting the hardness of the times, although they want nothing, and who have no compassion for the poor, who stand in need of every thing.

My Brethren, let us now pass to the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. What do we ask of God by these words: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." We ask pardon of the sins which we have had the misfortune to commit against our heavenly Father; we beg the divine Mercy to permit the merits of the passion and death of our loving Saviour to enter into our souls, that every stain of sin may be by them blotted out. But you know that God forgives only the repenting sinner: you pray then before all, for the grace of repentance, for a true contrition, which will lead you to the feet of the minister of Jesus Christ, and help you to intrust to him an humble confession of your sins. Oh! pray in all humility,—you will be heard, and God in His goodness will give you the kiss of peace and reconciliation.

At the same time, pay great attention to these words: "Forgive us, as we forgive." You desire to obtain from the bounty of God the grace of repentance, the happiness of having your sins effaced: God also ardently wishes it, but on condition that you pardon completely, sincerely, cordially and unreservedly, those who have injured you. The Holy Ghost thus speaks with indignation of the man who will not forgive injuries: "He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord: and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Man to man reserveth anger; and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself; and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger; and doth he ask forgiveness of God? who shall obtain pardon for his sins?"\* "The Lord will show mercy to him who has been merciful:" but if hatred, bitterness, rancor and resentment be fostered in your hearts, the God who pardoned His

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\* Ecclesiasticus, xxviii : 1, 3, 4, 5.



very executioners, will refuse your pardon. No forgiveness, He says, no mercy for him who will not forgive his brother. O ye whose hearts are filled with desires of revenge,—what an awful prayer is that you offer, when you dare say to the Almighty: “Forgive us, as we forgive others?” You will not forgive others; do you not, therefore, pronounce your own condemnation? And if at the moment of your death, the bitterness of rancor still holds possession of your hearts, God will never extend to you His forgiveness. My Brethren, where the love of God and of our neighbor, where the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of meekness and bounty reign,—there also reign peace and happiness. Let us, therefore, drive from our hearts every sentiment of hatred and rancor,—let us pardon and remit the few pence our neighbor owes us, let us cease to regard the evil he has done us, and think no more about it. When the remembrance of it presents itself to our minds, let us immediately reject the thought, and from our heart sincerely express our forgiveness of it; then will our heavenly Father forgive us the ten thousand talents which we owe Him; He will entirely efface our sins; He will make them as if they had never been. He will cast them behind Him, says the prophet, that He may no more see them; He will receive us into the bosom of His mercy, one day to translate us thence to the bosom of His glory in the paradise of His eternal light.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXIV.

SIXTH AND SEVENTH PETITIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.—(CONTINUED.)

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“And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”—ST. MATTHEW, vi.

GIVE us this day our daily bread: we have asked of our God the material bread by which our lives are supported; we have besought our heavenly Father to supply our temporal wants, to give us

lodging to shelter, and clothing to cover us. We have asked food for our souls, that is to say, the grace of God, to sanctify them; the divine Word, to enlighten them; the adorable Eucharist, to enter them, as a pledge to eternal life. But God will not dwell in our hearts if they be stained with sin; hence we send up to Him sighs of repentance and pray for the grace of forgiveness,—a grace which will be given us, if we ourselves forgive those who have offended us. Behold, my Brethren, the meaning of the two petitions of the Lord's Prayer which I explained to you in our last instruction. To-day I will conclude the explanation of the divine Prayer which our Saviour has taught us, by unfolding the meaning of the last two petitions.

When children have obtained from their father pardon of their offences, what remains for them to do, except henceforward to avoid these faults, and, by conducting themselves wisely, virtuously and irreproachably for the future, to console their indulgent parent whose heart they had previously saddened? It is thus the Lord wishes us to act. We have asked of God the forgiveness of our sins, and He has granted our request; He desires us now to pray for the grace not to relapse into them; He wishes that we should say to Him often: "Lead us not into temptation." But, my Brethren, what is the meaning of these words, which compose the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer? Before I answer this question, I wish you to understand well the signification of the word *temptation*. In the language of the Holy Scriptures, the word *temptation* has two very different meanings. In the first place, *temptation* signifies trial. The Lord often tempts man in this sense of the word. Yes, my Friends, often, and in various ways, does the Lord our God try the virtue of his children, to see whether they truly love Him; whether they are devoted to Him, in heart and in soul. Not that God does not know the most intimate affections and the most secret dispositions of every one of us, for every thing is open before the Lord; He searches the hearts and the reins, He knows the most hidden thoughts of our minds, He sees into the deepest recesses of our souls: why then does He wish these *trials*? It is that the hearts of His servants and the virtues which embellish their souls may be known by other men and revealed to the world. Abraham and Sara were old: nevertheless, God promises to His servant that he

should have a son, that he should be the father of a numerous posterity, and He gives to him Isaac, that child of benediction. But see, the Sovereign Master commands the holy patriarch to immolate this only child, on whose head rested such glorious hopes. Abraham is about to obey, when an angel arrests his arm. How terrible a trial this must have been! But, without it, we would not have known how admirable was the faith of Abraham, and how heroic was his obedience. It was for this reason the Lord wished to try His servant thus.

In the second place, to tempt, signifies to induce to evil, to excite to sin, to drive man to his destruction. It is peculiar to the devil to tempt us in this manner; he tempts us only to deceive us and bring about our ruin. God never makes use of this kind of temptation; He wishes it not,—he can not wish it,—He, the holy and the just, to whom the sinner and his wickedness are hateful alike. If God tempted men thus, He would be the author of sin; the mere thought of which, would be a horrible crime and blasphemy. “Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted of God: for God is not a tempter of evils,”\* says the Holy Ghost.

God is just, and his judgments are righteous, and nevertheless, He permits that you should be tempted by the devil, by your own concupiscence and your passions. It is because temptation is oftentimes very advantageous to you. You are tempted, my Brethren; it is to make you feel your own weakness, to teach you to distrust yourselves,—and the little reliance you should place on your own strength. You are tempted; it is because God desires to force you to have recourse to Him, who alone constitutes all our strength; He wishes “that you should lift up your eyes to heaven, whence all salvation cometh.” You are tempted; God suffers it, to purify your hearts; for the Holy Ghost assures us that, as fire tries and purifies gold, so does temptation try and purify the just man more and more. God permits you to be tempted, to afford you opportunities for exercising and acquiring virtues, for you can acquire them only by practicing them, and you can never practice them so well as during the time of temptation. At the same time, we must take care not to yield to the temptation; and yet we will yield if the

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\* St. James, i: 13.



grace of God come not to our assistance, for our weakness is exceeding great!

It is this powerful help of grace that our Saviour teaches us to ask of God by these words: "Lead us not into temptation." We pray to our Father who is in heaven, not to forsake us when temptation assails us; we beg Him to take us under His holy and powerful protection, and to arm us with His grace, that we may worthily fight the battle of faith, and be crowned with a glorious victory. We ask not for the removal of all temptation; for that would be to ask for an impossibility. Servants of Jesus Christ, you ought to be satisfied to be treated like your divine Master; and Jesus Christ, your Master, was tempted. The enemy of God is eager to persecute you, it is a good sign; it is a mark that you belong to God; it is perhaps because you have in your soul the glorious character of the elect. "Blessed is the man," says the Holy Ghost "that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him."\* Champion of the faith, soldier of Jesus Christ, resist temptation; thus will you treasure up riches for yourself in heaven; thus will you merit the crown of immortality,—a place in the bosom of the Lord.

Not to yield to temptation, is it enough to pray? No; Jesus Christ tells us that we must also watch. That is to say, my Brethren, you must remove from you and carefully avoid every thing which leads you to temptation and to sin; you must take special care that the devil does not surprise you. We complain of this great enemy of our salvation, and yet we leave all the doors of our heart open for him; he would cease to be dangerous if he could only roar outside. Know that the enemy of our salvation is strong only through our rashness, and that our rashness produces our want of strength. To expose yourselves willfully to sin, is in itself a sin. Do you think, then, that your prayer will be heard, when you do not shun the occasion of evil? You walk along the brink of a precipice boldly and unconcernedly, and you say to God: Lord, keep me from falling: of your own accord, you enter a furnace, and you say: Lord, keep me from burning. But, he who loves the

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\* St. James, i: 12.

danger will perish in the danger. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, and the grace of God will come to you from on high. The just have cried to the Lord, and the Lord has heard their supplications, and He has delivered them from their tribulations. This is what we ask from God in the last petition of the Lord's Prayer:—"but deliver us from evil."

How good our God is! how wide the extent He has given to His Prayer. This last petition, in some measure, embraces all the others. In fact, we here pray for deliverance from all evils, whether of this world or of the world to come. We beg of God to preserve us from a sudden and an unprovided death, from the awful punishments which await the impenitent sinner in hell, and from the fire which purifies the souls in purgatory. We entreat Him to save us from water, from fire, from thunder and lightning, from wars and civil commotions. We implore Him to remove far from us, sickness, havoc, famine, snares and treason. We ask, in a word, that riches, honors, health, and even life may never be to us a source of sin,—may never turn to our misfortune and the ruin of our immortal souls.

"Amen:" that is to say, may it be done as we have prayed; may all our petitions be granted; we believe that it will be so, we hope it. "Amen:" such the concluding word of the Lord's Prayer. This conclusion should be pronounced with special piety and sincerity, as well to supply our want of attention and fervor in the other parts of the Prayer, as to make a last effort to touch the heart of our heavenly Father.

Nothing is more holy, more affecting, more sublime, or more efficacious than the Lord's Prayer. It is the Prayer of Jesus Christ, and in the words which we pronounce, "Our Father," who is the Father of our Saviour, recognizes the words of His well-beloved Son, of the Son who became a victim of reconciliation for our sins, through obedience to His Father. Whenever we devoutly say, "Our Father," God will hear us; for the Son of God, who dwells in our hearts, will be on our lips; and can God refuse the Prayer of Jesus, His Son? The Lord's Prayer is a golden key, by which we can open all the treasures of heaven. May all then, love it, venerate it, and esteem it as the most precious of blessings; make frequent use of it,—for I do not hesitate to assert that they who

will recite this beautiful Prayer in the way God desires us to recite it, that is, with heart and soul, will obtain every thing necessary for them in this life, and will one day be put in possession of the unspeakable treasures of a happy eternity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXV.

### THE HAIL MARY.

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“Hail, full of grace.”—LUKE, i: 28.

THE “Our Father” is the most excellent of all prayers, as it came from heaven, and was communicated to us by the Father himself through the Son; it is therefore the best prayer we can address to our heavenly Father. So, from one end of the world to the other, it is constantly ascending from Christian hearts to heaven. What graces will not this beautiful prayer obtain for us, and what blessed fruits of salvation will it not produce in us, if it is offered to God by the spotless hands of Mary? How powerful before God is the intercession of Mary! Therefore doubtless it is, that everywhere the Lord’s Prayer is always immediately followed by the Hail Mary. You love this salutary prayer, and I doubt not you will repeat it with still greater fervor, when I shall have told you the meaning of the beautiful words of which it is composed.

The Hail Mary is so called from the first words of which it is composed, and which were addressed by the angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin Mary when he announced to her that she would become the Mother of God. It is divided into three parts. The first was made by the angel; it consists in these words: “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.” The second, are the words of St. Elizabeth, who said to Mary: “Blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”\* The third

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\* Luke, i: 42.



part is a prayer added by the Church, beginning with the words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God," by which words the Church assembled in council at Ephesus, crushed the heresy which dared to deny to Mary the glorious title of Mother of God. Is not this prayer therefore truly excellent, and have not the words which compose it been first uttered by holy lips? Yes, my Brethren; and there is no other by which we can so well praise, bless and invoke the holy Virgin. How in fact can we praise the blessed Virgin in a manner more agreeable to her, than by addressing her in the words which she first heard from the mouth of an angel, when he came to announce to her the wonders which the Most High was about to work in her, and which exalted her to the highest degree of glory and grandeur? Can we venerate the holy Mother of God more, than by recalling to memory, and fixing in our hearts the adorable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and repeating these words of St. Elizabeth: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb;" that is to say, blessed be that mystery so glorious to thee, O holy Virgin! blessed be that heavenly fruit of life, Jesus, our Redeemer, whom thy chaste womb has given us: thanks be to thee, O Mary! and blessed be thou forever, for thou hast been made the instrument of giving to the world the Divine Liberator, who came to crush the serpent's head; to break the chains of our shameful bondage, and blot out the sentence of death which had been written against us. Yes, holy Virgin, be thou forever blessed,—thou and Jesus, the fruit of thy womb!

My Brethren, these words of thanksgiving open Mary's heart to us, and naturally lead us to address to her a petition which can not fail to please her. It is contained in these words: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now, and at the hour of our death." Let us pray with all confidence, for we are the brethren of Jesus Christ; and Mary, our mother, will hear us. Let us now see, my Brethren, what are the sacred truths contained in the words of which the Hail Mary is composed.

The archangel Gabriel salutes Mary by the title "full of grace." What do these beautiful words signify? They signify that Mary alone received from God more graces than all other creatures together; they teach us that God, having chosen Mary among all the daughters of Sion, to be the Mother of His well-beloved Son,

enriched her with His gifts, heaped upon her His favors, and poured upon her all the treasures of His bounty. "Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all!"\* O Mother of God! they participated in the graces of the Lord; but thou, O Mary, art filled with them, "and the Lord is with thee."

It is true, we also are temples wherein the Lord dwelleth; and, if we be in the state of grace, it can be said of us: the Lord is with us. But He was with Mary in a quite different manner. It was in her He was pleased to assume human flesh, to be made man, and to remain for the space of nine months. He is in the heart of Mary; He fills her entire understanding, possesses all her will, is the principle of all her thoughts, of all her actions, of all the sentiments of her heart and soul; and He has never permitted that the slightest stain should sully its purity and beauty. Yes, Mary, "the Lord is with thee." The messenger of God adds: "Blessed art thou among women." Of all the women that appeared on earth since the beginning of the world,—of all the women who shall dwell on earth till the end of time, Mary is the most worthy, the most holy, the most exalted in grace and glory before God. She alone, among all the children of Adam, was conceived without sin. Never has the slightest imperfection been found in her beautiful soul, this living temple of God, wherein even His eye could not discover the least stain. The heart of Mary was full of faith, of hope, of charity, of humility, of meekness, of patience, of purity, in a word the sanctuary of every virtue; and from the day of her entrance into the world till the hour of her death, Mary ceased not one single instant to advance from virtue to virtue, and to grow in sanctity and perfection. In fine, most holy Virgin, not only art thou of all the daughters of Sion the most excellent, the most chaste, the most faithful, the most holy; but thou art also the Mother of the world's Redeemer,—the Mother of God. With good reason then did the angel say to thee: "Blessed art thou among women!"

St. Elizabeth also said to Mary: "Blessed art thou among women;" and immediately added; "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." For the Holy Ghost had revealed to the venerable spouse

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\* Proverbs, xxxi : 29.

of Zachary, that the "heavens had dropped down the divine dew, and the clouds had rained down the Just One, and that the Desired of nations" was before her, in the virginal womb of Mary. Jesus, the Saviour of the world; Jesus, the angel of peace and the true Solomon; Jesus is the fruit of thy womb, O Mary: beyond doubt, thou art all-powerful with Him, and He hastens to hear the prayers which thou present to Him in heaven. Therefore it is that the Church of Thy divine Son requires that we should say every day, and with boundless confidence: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.

Holy Mary, our Lady, our Queen, most beloved daughter of Sion, who wast overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, who hast conceived in thy womb the Son of the Eternal, who hast given Him the flesh which He was to sacrifice and the blood He was to shed for our salvation; Mother of God, employ in our behalf, the merciful power wherewith the Lord has invested thee; pray for us, poor sinners, thou who lovest so much the title of refuge and help of sinners; thou who art the star that must lead us to the gates of eternal happiness. Consider our misery, and thy maternal heart will be moved; pray for us to thy divine Son, thy prayer will be granted, and our salvation will be the fruit of thy humble, but all-powerful intercession. Pray for us *now*, that is to say, always, every instant of our lives, for we every instant need thy assistance, O Mother of God! My Brethren, we have constantly new sins to lament, new weaknesses to fear, new dangers to avoid, new duties to fulfill, and consequently, new graces to obtain through the intercession of that heavenly Mother of mercy. May Mary then pray for us, poor sinners, now, always, and above all, "at the hour of our death," that we be not troubled by the fear of death and by the temptations of the devil, who, at that decisive moment redoubles his efforts, employs all his cunning, and makes use of all his malice to effect our perdition. May Mary then pray for us, that we may support all our afflictions and sufferings, with meritorious and Christian patience, that we may worthily receive the last sacraments, the fountains of grace, of forgiveness, and the pledges of eternal salvation; that we may preserve the spirit of penance and contrition, of confidence in God, and resignation to the will of Heaven; that, in fine, persevering in grace, and confirmed in divine love, we may deserve to be received into



the bosom of Abraham forever. Mary is most pleasing to the heart of God the Father, of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost! Mary is most powerful! She is the Mother of God. She desires our happiness,—she wishes to conduct us to God. Invoke then this holy Virgin; often address to her that beautiful angelic salutation which I have explained; recite it in your toils and afflictions, and you will be consoled; in your temptations, and you will be strengthened; say it Christians, every day, especially in the morning and evening; but you, above all, young people, who are so often and so violently tried by temptation, pray to Mary, and Mary will pray for you, and the assistance of God will be given you; you will then do what God commands, and the day will come when you will be invited to glorify Him in heaven, in the society of angels, in company with the saints and with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, our Saviour, forever.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXVI.

### DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

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“Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—ST. LUKE, i : 48.

THIS prophecy of the blessed Virgin has been accomplished. The Church and all her true children, for the last eighteen hundred years, have never ceased to love, honor, venerate and invoke Mary; and every day she is called blessed, and truly blessed among women. I thank God, my Brethren, that I have the happiness also to see devotion to Mary established among you; that all of you pray to her with piety, fervor and confidence. After the adorable name of Jesus, that which mothers should be most eager to teach their children, is the sacred name of Mary. You have good reason, my Brethren, to honor her whom God has elevated to the super-eminent dignity of Mother of the Saviour, to invoke her who is the Queen of saints, and whom the Lord has invested with unspeakable

power. But, says St. Paul, be your worship and homage pure and rational ; they must be so to please Mary and obtain for you the graces and blessings of God. Hear me then, with attention, that you may learn what the worship is, which you ought to pay to the most holy Mother of God.

In heaven, the throne of Mary is exalted far above that of the angels and saints, but below the throne of the Eternal, for she is not God : great honor and veneration are therefore due to the Queen of heaven ; but we must be very careful not to render to her the worship which belongs only to God,—the worship which is due to the Supreme Being alone,—the worship of divine adoration. No doubt, the blessed Virgin should be honored and revered more than all the angels and saints, since she is their Queen ; but we must not forget what faith teaches us ; that there is, and there can be but one divine Nature, and that belongs to God alone. We acknowledge and adore this divine Nature, one and indivisible, in the three divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity ; but we acknowledge and adore it only in these three adorable persons, who constitute but one God. We have not forgotten the law of the Lord, for we know that His first precept is this : “One God alone shalt thou adore, and Him alone shalt thou love with thy whole heart ;” so we carefully avoid transferring to Mary the adoration which belongs to God, for Mary herself would exclaim against us : this most holy Virgin, who delighted so much to declare that she was but the humble handmaid of the Lord, would reject with horror such homage. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” she says to the angel, “be it done to me according to thy word : ” and again, to her cousin St. Elizabeth : “the Lord hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.”

Mary is not God ; she can not, therefore, originate grace. God alone is the author of grace ; He alone gives and grants it to man. So we do not approach Mary to ask this precious gift of grace as if she created it, or by her own power conferred it ; no, we only pray to Mary to ask it for us. It is for this reason that when we address God in prayer, we say : “Heavenly Father, true God, divine Son, Redeemer of the world, Holy Ghost, who art God, have mercy upon us, pity us,” because God alone can bestow grace. But as soon as we turn to Mary, our prayer changes, and we say with the Church : “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us ; Holy Mary, Mother of

God, pray for us now, and at the hour of our death." We pray thus, and we do so with all confidence, because, although Mary is not the author of grace, God will never refuse to the prayer of His heavenly daughter, of His well-beloved Mother, of His cherished Spouse, this grace so precious in itself and so necessary for us. We do not in the worship we render to Mary, transfer to her the adoration which belongs only to God; but we heartily delight to honor Mary, to celebrate her glory, her power and her happiness. We imitate the messenger of heaven, and like the angel we say to Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." We imitate the holy spouse of Zachary, the mother of St. John the Baptist, and with her we say: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." With the angel and with Elizabeth, we honor and glorify God himself in the person of Mary; we honor and glorify God the Father, before whom Mary had found favor; God the Son, whom this holy Virgin had given to the world; God the Holy Ghost, whose power had wrought in her such great miracles. We honor and glorify Mary, and we fulfill the prophetic words which God put into her mouth, when she said: "Behold, all generations shall call me blessed, for He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is His name." We honor and invoke Mary, because such is the will of God, since He has rendered her worthy of all honor, and has elevated her to a supereminent dignity, the source to her of wonderful power. We honor and invoke Mary, because we wish to walk in the foot steps of the saints, and because the saints never ceased and shall never cease to honor and glorify the holy Mother of God.

Yes, my Brethren, let us pray to Mary with an ardent devotion and with great confidence. But do not forget that Mary wishes, above all things, that you should honor and invoke Jesus and His divine Father, from whom she received every thing. Do not forget that she wishes to bring you to Jesus, and that it is from the goodness and mercy of Jesus that you must expect your salvation. Jesus, alone, is the way, the truth, and the life; and "there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved,"\*

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\* Acts, iv : 12.



than the name of Jesus. Mary is powerful, and her prayer has a wonderful efficacy; but will she pray for you, if you forget Jesus, "in whom are the words of eternal life?" No, she will not hear your desires and supplications,—she will not present them to her divine Son, if you do not place all your confidence in Him, if you forget Him. Implore then Mary to intercede for you, but so that you expect from Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, the graces and the favors which you solicit; and Mary will love you, will protect you, and will intercede in your behalf with her divine Son, who died for you, who is your only mediator with the heavenly Father. This is the way in which you must pray to Mary, to honor her and to honor God.

We praise and extol Mary; she is most worthy of our praise, and God desires that we should venerate His blessed Mother, whom He has made the master-piece of creation. "Most happy Virgin," says St. Ambrose, "Mary, ever Virgin, is the greatest wonder of God. Who has ever been more holy than Mary? She surpasses in sanctity the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs, the angels, the thrones, the principalities, the seraphim and the cherubim; among all creatures, visible and invisible, there is not one equal to Mary in grandeur and sanctity; not one who like her was, at the same time, the servant and the Mother of God, a Mother and a Virgin." How pleasing, therefore, must it be to God to honor and glorify Mary! But Mary will not consider herself glorified by your praise, your canticles and your prayers, if you do not, at the same time, glorify God by your actions; if you do not imitate her virtues. How indeed could such unworthy homage be pleasing to her, who had so much at heart the glory of God, and so often on her lips the beautiful words: "O my soul! glorify the Lord." Alas! my Brethren, we praise her and invoke her to little effect, while we care so little to imitate her example! What indeed can they expect from their prayers, and what honor do they render to Mary and to God, who, this moment recite the five decades of their Rosary, and immediately after utter a decade of blasphemies and curses? What honor do they render to God and to Mary, who, in the Litany, give to the Mother of God the most glorious titles, and the next instant discharge a litany of oaths and calumnies against their neighbor? What merit can you claim, and what can be the efficacy of your prayers, you

fathers and mothers, who, while you praise the blessed Virgin and extol her love for her divine Son, her meek humility, her gentleness and her inviolable fidelity to virtue, yet take no care of your children, do not trouble yourselves about their education, have no peace or concord among yourselves, no love, no fidelity for one another? What must we think of or expect from your devotion to Mary, ye young men and young women, who, while you glorify the angelic purity and the heavenly beauty of her soul, permit your own minds and hearts, your mouth and your ears to be filled with thoughts, desires, words and actions which purity condemns? No, it is not thus that Mary wishes to be honored! If you desire that your prayers should be agreeable to her, and that she should love and protect you, resolve at once to imitate her example and to walk in her footsteps. Imitate her meekness, her docility, her humility, her resignation to the divine will under affliction, her love of God, and charity for her neighbor. Endeavor like her to be modest, strive like her to be pure, then you will honor her with your tongue and with your heart; God will be glorified by the praise, respect and veneration which you pay to his holy Mother; Mary will be united to you; she will receive your prayers,—she will present them to God, and these prayers will return from heaven to you, but loaded with graces and blessings to fortify you in the love and practice of virtue, to console you in your sorrows and sufferings, to render you strong and courageous in the contest you have to wage against the enemies of your salvation, and help you to advance even to the mountain of the Lord. This is the way in which you must act, if you would have Mary become for you the ark of the covenant, the gate of heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON XXXVII.

## IMITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—ST. MATTHEW, vii : 21.

MY Brethren, we all desire to honor the blessed Virgin, and merit her powerful intercession with God. Mary is, indeed, worthy of all glory and honor, and her prayers will obtain for us innumerable and most salutary graces, for her divine Son can refuse her nothing. The blessed Virgin loves us, and the most ardent desire of her heart is to make us happy, to render us partakers of the happiness which she now possesses in the bosom of Abraham. Nevertheless, I imagine that I hear her addressing us, in the words of her divine Son: Not every one that saith, Mary, Mary, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that, like me, doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yes, my Brethren, we render ourselves worthy of the protection of Mary, and we will share in her glory and happiness, if we imitate this perfect model of every virtue ; if, like her, we do what God commands, if we suffer as He wishes us to suffer, if we love what He loves, if, in a word, like Mary, we truly love God.

If you love God, you will do what he commands. Our divine Lord has said : he who loves me, keeps my commandments and hears my words ; and he who loves me not, will not reduce my words to practice. Do you wish, therefore, to know if the love of God reign in your hearts ? Show yourselves constantly obedient to the commands of the Lord, be ever determined to do his holy will in all things, advance steadfastly in the way of His commandments, and let nothing in heaven, on earth, or in hell, be able to separate you from your God.

It was thus that Mary loved the Lord, and that she was ever



faithful to His adorable will, obedient to His holy law, under all circumstances, and during her whole life. Sin never entered into her pure soul. The conception of Mary was immaculate, and all the gifts of grace were given in abundance to the humble Virgin whom God destined to be the Mother of the Saviour of the world. This white robe of innocence, with which heaven had invested her, Mary ever preserved pure and spotless. During the whole course of her life, as the holy fathers testify, this heavenly Virgin never committed the slightest sin: she constantly remained all fair and beautiful, and the celestial beauty of her soul was never soiled. Her whole happiness was to do, in all things, what God commanded. As a perfect Israelite, she was subject to all the ordinances of the Mosaic law. She became the Mother of God, but did not thereby cease to be a Virgin; this sublime prerogative dispensed her from the precept of purification; nevertheless, she submitted to it to avoid even the shadow of disobedience in what the Lord prescribed. She recognized God's will in that of temporal superiors; and to obey it, at the very time when she was about to give birth to Jesus, she undertook a long and painful journey to Bethlehem, there to have her name enrolled as the Roman emperor had commanded. Yes, Mary loved the law of God; she meditated upon it unceasingly, she carried it written in her heart, upon her forehead, and in her hands; she trembled at the mere idea of violating it, at the bare thought of the slightest fault. "The law of God was the torch that enlightened her steps, the light that guided her in all her ways."

Is it thus, my Brethren, that we act? Is it thus, that we fulfill what God wishes and ordains? Do we thus love and cherish the holy law of the Lord? From our earliest years, we have learned to repeat: "O my God! I love thee with my whole heart and soul and above all things;" but, alas! these beautiful words are on our lips, while the sentiments they express are far from our hearts, for we do not perform what God commands. Is our life, indeed, anything else but a continual series of transgressions and violations of the law of God? No, we do not imitate the Blessed Virgin, trampling under foot as we do, the most sacred precepts of the Lord. Go through the Decalogue, which God himself has written; call to mind the precepts which He has empowered His Church to impose upon you, and see how many things there are that God for-

bids, and which, nevertheless, you commit; how many things which He prescribes, and yet you neglect. How many are the wicked thoughts, evil words, and sinful actions which stain your souls! Does the love of God, then, reside in you? Confess it, my dear Brethren, you do not imitate the blessed Virgin; you do not love God as she loved Him. He who loves God desires what God desires, and submits himself to the will of his heavenly Father. If God ordains him to walk along the path of sorrows, he bows his head and walks along it. He may indeed say with his divine Master: "My father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me;" but he will immediately add; "yet not my will but thine be done," and he will accept the chalice, no matter how bitter it be.

It was thus that the most perfect agreement never ceased to reign between the will of Mary and the will of God. She was ever submissive and resigned to every thing that heaven required of her, and, with calmness and patience, she passed through the most trying scenes that ever affected the heart of a spouse and a Mother. Everywhere, and always, she recognized the hand of God, and adored it. Mary stood at the foot of the cross on which her divine Son expired; it was there that her heart was pierced by the sword of sorrow which the holy old man Simeon had foretold. Alas! how terribly her soul must have suffered! and yet not a murmur, not a complaint was found on her lips: for she knew that the hand which held the sword was the hand of God. And from the bottom of her heart, she said with her divine Son: "My Father, let thy will and not mine be done." No, never did any one suffer as Mary suffered, no grief was like unto her grief, no sorrows were like unto hers, and yet never was mere creature so submissive and resigned; well does she deserve to be called the "Mother of Sorrows," the "Queen of Martyrs." May we, my dear Brethren, imitate her example!

We also have much to suffer in this world, in this sad valley of tears. Often does the Lord chastise us, because we deserve punishment and He loves us. God sends us bitter trials, because He wishes that we should walk in the road of affliction, to arrive at eternal glory, and because trials work patience, and patience, the merit which opens heaven. If we love God, let us be careful not to

murmur and complain. If we love God, we will find great consolation in the holy and salutary belief, that, if we suffer, it is because such is the will of God, who loves us with a most tender love; and our hearts will at once say: O my God, may your holy will be done! I accept and I bless these strokes of thy justice, O my God! I richly merit them, and I am too happy thus to have it in my power to expiate my sins, which rendered me so guilty in thy sight. My Brethren, if we murmur when God afflicts us, if we revolt against the orders of Providence, we do not imitate the ever blessed Virgin Mary, we do not love God.

In fine, the third mark of the true love of God, is to love what God loves, and to abhor what he detests. There are persons in the world who occupy in our regard the place of God; these are our parents and superiors; God loves them, we also must love them. The poor are the members and suffering brethren of Jesus Christ: He loves them, we also must love them. We have enemies, that injure and persecute us: God loves them, as instruments which He uses to punish and chastise us for our sins; we also must love them. All men are brethren, all are children of one heavenly Father, created to His image: He loves them all, we must also love all. But God detests sin, abhors those who violate His holy law, who persecute His disciples, who sow in his vineyard perverse doctrines, who, by their impious designs and bad example, bring about the corruption of morals, and labor for the destruction of immortal souls. Such as these we ought to shun; we must avoid them as workers of iniquity, yet without ceasing to love them as brothers. This was the way that Mary always acted: she never voluntarily entered the company of the wicked; and, like the royal prophet, she could well say to the Lord: "I have hated the unjust, and have loved Thy law: I have hated those that work iniquity in Thy sight; the proud and ambitious and the corrupt in heart have not sat at my table, and I held in abomination those who hated Thee." Mary fled from the company of the wicked, but she lamented their perversity, for the love of her neighbor was deeply rooted in her heart, and she never ceased to love all mankind as her brethren. Oh! how her heart exulted with exceeding joy when she found that she was to give birth to the Saviour, who was to be for us the way which leads to the happiness of heaven. How happy was this holy Virgin!



every time that her divine Son, passing through this world doing good, blotted out the sins of men, and spread everywhere along His path graces, blessings, health and life! Mary loved us, and it was because she loved us so much, that she desired to suffer so much for us; that she wished to assist at the agony of her divine Son, and to be sprinkled with the adorable blood that was to effect our redemption. Yes, God loved us so much that He gave His Son to redeem us, says the Apostle; and I fearlessly add, with a holy father: Mary loved us so much, that had the Jews failed to do so, she herself would have sacrificed her divine Son, whose death was to be our life.

Is it thus that we love those whom God loves, and avoid those whom He detests? Do we love the poor? Do their miseries touch our hearts, and do we relieve them according to our means? Do we love our parents and superiors, and show ourselves obedient to them? Do we love our enemies? Do we forgive them? Is there no hatred, no malice in our hearts? Do we pray for those who hate and persecute us?

Do we avoid the society of the wicked? Alas! too often do you seek the company of the vicious, and select as your friends those who delight in offending the Lord, who despise His holy religion, corrupt the hearts of the young and innocent, and ruin immortal souls. You love then what God detests, and you do not imitate the blessed Virgin. Nevertheless, my Brethren, we must imitate her, if we desire to be partakers of her happiness; we must follow her in the path of virtue to which she invites us; this is the only condition on which she will grant us the support of her powerful intercession. She loved what God loved, she desired what God desired, she did what He commanded: let us do the same, my dear Brethren, and, when we shall ask ourselves if we love God, our works will immediately answer. Yes, you love your God, and He loves you: you follow the footsteps of Mary, and she will be with you: she will pray for you,—she will protect you, now and at the hour of your death. At this awful and decisive moment, Mary will, so to speak, hover around your death-bed; she will strengthen you, will encourage you, will receive your soul, and will transport it with joy into the mansions of everlasting rest.—AMEN.



## PART III.

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### SERMON XXXVIII.

#### THE LOVE OF GOD.

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“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.”—ST. MATTHEW, xxii : 37.

MY Brethren, we know what faith is, and what it teaches us ; what hope is, and the blessings it promises us : I am now about to tell you what charity is, and the commandments which it helps us to observe. Charity is “the end and the perfection of the law,” says the Holy Ghost : he who has not charity is nothing in the sight of God. “It is charity that distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil,” says St. Augustine. St. Francis of Sales adds : “Virtue consists in the Love of God ; perfection consists in the Love of God ; in a word, in love, every thing consists. Salvation is shown to faith, prepared for hope, but given only to charity.” What then is charity ? “Charity is a supernatural virtue, by which we love God above all things, because He is infinitely worthy of love, and our neighbor as ourselves for the Love of God.” It has for its object God and our neighbor ; it is the Love of God and the love of our neighbor. I will tell you to-day why we ought to love God, and how we ought to love Him.

God must certainly be little known, since He is so little loved ! In truth, can we know the Sovereign Good, the only true good,—the source of all good,—and not love Him ? “Yes,” says St. Bernard, “the great reason for loving God, is God himself.” If we knew the Lord our God, in His infinite perfections, we would say with St. Michael, the archangel : “Who is like unto God,” and who



deserves to be loved as the Lord does? God is the Supreme Being; the Being by excellence; He possesses in an infinite degree every possible perfection; He is infinitely above all that created intelligence can conceive of good, or beautiful, or great, or holy. You love creatures; but it is from God that they have received every thing in them that makes you love them, and they all say to you: it is God who made us what we are. You love creatures; but what is the grandeur, the beauty, the power of created beings, but the shadowy reflex of the grandeur, the beauty, and the power of God? Beside, my Brethren, in creatures, good and amiable qualities are oftentimes accompanied by so many defects, that they can please only when viewed at a distance: but in God all is perfection, without admixture of defect, and every thing ought to impel us to love Him. God is the union of all perfections,—He is the Sovereign Good; we ought therefore to love Him, because He is infinitely amiable in himself, and we ought also to love Him, because His goodness is an immense treasure, from which we can draw an abundance of graces and blessings.

It was God who called you out of nothing; His hand fashioned your body, and His breath gave birth to your soul, to that soul, the master-piece of earthly creatures, which, created to the likeness of God, elevates you to the rank of rational beings, and places you above all things visible. It is God who has given you life, and who preserves it for you: His infinite goodness constantly watches over you and protects you. He wishes that all creatures should serve your use, and heaps upon you the sweetness of His blessings and His favors. All that we are, all that we possess, our being, our motion, and our life, we have received from God. But what are all these things in comparison to what God has condescended still more to do for us? To redeem us, my Brethren, and thereby win our love, he gave himself entirely to us, became man, was made flesh, and died! Is not your heart satisfied with this proof of His love? Most assuredly it is. Well! the heart of our God discovered that this was not sufficient for Him, and He chose the most cruel death,—the death of the cross! My God, Thou hast loved us with an excessive love,—even to die for us! Can it be possible that Thou wilt add still more to what Thou hast already done? O unspeakable love! Our loving Redeemer, not content with immolating

himself once on Calvary, wishes that this adorable sacrifice should be renewed every day, and a thousand times a day! He was not content to live and die for us, but He desired to remain forever with those whom He loves, and even to the very end of time, He will be present in the sacrament of love,—in the holy Eucharist. My Brethren, let us go to the foot of the cross on Calvary, let us go to the foot of our altars, and there prostrating ourselves before our divine Lord, say, ought we not to love our God? God died for us, and, that He might dwell among us, He seems almost to annihilate himself: Oh! if we love Him not, we are the most ungrateful of wretches! I can easily understand the anathema which the Apostle St. Paul pronounces against those who love not the Lord Jesus. And may I not also say with him: Anathema to those who refuse to God a love which He purchased at so dear a rate! Anathema to those who are insensible to the effusion of the blood of a God! Heaven grant, my Brethren, that this anathema fall not on you! Love then the Lord, consecrate to Him the affections of your heart, and let your love be such as He desires.

St. Francis of Sales points out, in a few words, the marks of true love of God. "This love must prevail over every thing that we love, and rule over all our passions. What is it that God demands of us? It is that in every thing we love, the love of God should be the most *cordial*, reigning over all our heart; the most *affectionate*, occupying our whole soul; the most *general*, engaging all our powers; the most *elevated*, filling our whole mind; the most *steadfast*, exercising all our strength and all our energies." "Thou shalt love then the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind and with all thy strength." To love God then, the rule we must follow is, to love Him above all things. God must occupy the first place in your heart and in your love, above all things, above the angels in heaven and the saints in paradise; above your parents, your children, your friends, your benefactors; above all the goods and pleasures of this world; above your happiness, your health, and even your life. Thus we must never suffer any affection in our heart which we can not offer to God, nor should we ever love any thing but in relation to Him. He is our sovereign Good, our last end: and we would be giving way to sad disorder, did we love any thing beside God, more than

God, or as much as God. To love God above all things, is a sacred duty : if such is not our charity, if such is not our love, there is for us no salvation, "we are not worthy of God."

If you truly love God, united with that divine love, there will be found in your hearts the sincere and firm resolution of sacrificing all your goods, all your fortune, of suffering every pain and every persecution, of giving up your body to torments, of immolating your life, of crushing every affection and every love, rather than do any thing displeasing to God. He who acts thus loves God as He ought to be loved, above all things.

If you truly love the Lord, you ought to love to speak of Him, to hear His word ; you must love to think of Him, and raise your hearts to Him as often as possible ; for "where your treasure is, there also will be your heart,"—there will be your thoughts. If you truly love God, you will study to render yourself every day more pleasing to Him by a pious, wise and prudent life, by faithfully observing His commandments, by perseverance and exactness in the performance of all the duties of your state. "Let him who is just become still more just ; be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect," says our divine Saviour.

If you love God, you will put your trust in Him, you will submit without a murmur to the arrangements of His divine providence, to the ways of His adorable wisdom : like St. Francis of Sales, you will cast your care on the goodness of God, and lean upon Him, with as much tranquillity as an infant upon the bosom of its mother ; and you will say : God has promised to assist us in our tribulations, what therefore do we fear ? Nothing happens except with God's permission, and we know that He loves us ; let us therefore have courage and patience.

Is it thus, my Brethren, that we love the Lord our God ? Perhaps human respect has prevailed over the Love of God in our timid and pusillanimous hearts ; perhaps slothfulness, attachment to the things of this life, or self-love have urged us to transgress the holy law of God, to deny to the Lord the love which is due Him. If such be the case, let us not continue in this unhappy state, "for he who loveth not abideth in death." Let us quit this death, let us shake off this slothfulness, let us drive away this cold indifference, let us lament our faults, let us do penance, and love. Yes ! let us



love a God so great, so good, and so amiable, who has done so much for us, and who will do still more; and let us pray that the flames of divine love may never more be extinguished in our hearts, but that they may burn there and consume in us every worldly attachment and every inordinate affection; that thus our lives may flow along in the practice of every virtue, and merit for us the happiness of being admitted to love God for ever in heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XXXIX.

### LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

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“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—ST. MATTHEW, xxii: 39.

WE must love God, the Supreme Being, the only Being truly worthy of love, because He possesses in himself every perfection. We ought to love Him, because He is for us the source of every good. But, my Brethren, it is not enough to love God, we must also Love our Neighbor. The Gospel joins together the Love of God and the Love of the Neighbor; it requires that these two loves should be inseparable, and it even declares that it is impossible for us truly to love God, whom we see not, unless we also Love our Neighbor, whom we see. You understand then, why I mean to speak to you to-day of this Love of our Neighbor, which God so much desires to see established in our hearts, and I trust you will listen to me with attention.

Who is our Neighbor? The catechism furnishes us with an answer: Our Neighbors are all men in general, because, like us, they have been created to the image of God and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. By the word Neighbor, then, we must not understand only our relations, our friends, our benefactors, the inhabitants of the same city, of the same kingdom, or those who profess the same religion with us. No! I am a man, and as such every man has claims on my heart. This affecting word Neighbor, introduced into human language by the Gospel,

comprehends all mankind, without distinction or exception, that is to say, our fellow-citizens and strangers, Christians illumined by the light of the true faith, and heretics buried in the darkness of error, Jews and idolaters, our friends and our enemies. Charity must be universal, that is to say, catholic, like our faith. If we refuse our affection to even one, be he our enemy and even God's enemy, we have no longer the virtue of charity.\* We must love all men, for all are children of the same God, and the Lord showers His graces and favors upon all: the dews of heaven fertilize the earth for the good and the bad,—for the good and the bad, the sun shines in the firmament and sheds heat and light on the world; such is the will of our Father who is in heaven. We must Love our Neighbor, that is to say, all mankind, because, like us, they sprung from the creative hand of God; like us, they have received from the Sovereign Master, an intelligent and rational soul, upon which God stamped His own image; like us, they have been redeemed by the blood of the Man-God,—which flowed upon Calvary for the salvation of all; like us, they are all called to eternal life, and they have all also the means of attaining it, as long as they live here below. We ought to love all men, because we form with them but one and the same society,—one and the same family. And do we not, my Brethren, wish to be loved by our neighbor? Therefore, it is but just that we should also love them.

We must Love our Neighbor: this law is engraved in ineffaceable characters upon the inmost recesses of the heart; but lest we should not pay sufficient attention to it, Jesus Christ has made of it a new commandment for us; He says to us: "I give you a new commandment: that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."\* But our loving Saviour is not satisfied with proclaiming the obligation of Loving our Neighbor; He presents himself as the model to be imitated in the accomplishment of this sacred duty. Let us then read the history of His life, let us study well the actions of this divine model, and we shall learn to love all men, without exception of persons, and without excluding any. Jesus passed His life in going about doing good, and it was not alone to His friends, or to persons remarkable for their dignity,

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\* St. John, xiii : 34.

their piety, or their wealth, for whom He worked His miracles and granted His favors; no, never did any unjust preference enter His heart: His blessings were lavished without distinction on great and small,—poor and rich,—just and sinful. He came on earth for all, He suffered for all, and shed the last drop of His sacred blood for all mankind. I should now be allowed, my Brethren, to address you in the words of St. Paul:—I do not believe it necessary to exhort you to the practice of charity toward your brethren: you have learned how to love one another by observing the example which your divine Saviour has given you.—If such be the case, you should carefully avoid giving fraternal charity limits which it ought not to have, and circumscribing it within a narrow circle within which only a few privileged persons are admitted. Remember, that you ought to love all men, even your enemies, for they have not ceased to be your neighbors by becoming your enemies, and you ought to walk in the footsteps of the Man-God, who, when dying, prayed even for His executioners. Your charity must be boundless, it must be universal, it must stop only at the gates of hell, it must except only the demons and the damned, who are forever excluded from the mansions of eternal bliss, because they are the irreconcilable enemies of God. But as to men, you must love them without exception. But what kind of love should we bear to them?

In the first place, we ought to Love our Neighbor for the love of God. The Love of our Neighbor ought not to seek its principle and its motive in the qualities and perfections which distinguish such and such persons, not in our sensibility, not in our self-love and our natural inclinations, not in the benefits which we have received from our neighbor, not from the services which he has rendered to us; for that would be only a natural love, which could not please God; it would not be Christian. You must Love your Neighbor for the love of God, that is to say, because God commands you to do so. Whether our neighbor be virtuous or vicious, possessed of qualities which suit us, or of defects which displease us; whether he has done us good or evil, he must still have no less share in our affection. If you love a person, you esteem the painting which preserves his features: you should then Love your Neighbor, for he has been created to the image and likeness of God, whom you love. You should still further love him, because God loved and redeemed



him, and invites him to heaven. You should Love your Neighbor for the love of God, that is to say, you should love him with a true and sincere love.

Pay attention to this, my Brethren ; God does not want us to content ourselves with the simple appearance of love, or to confine our love to mere words. No, no, it is not an apparent and deceitful love,—a hypocritical love, a love in which the heart takes no part, that God requires of us. We must Love our Neighbor as ourselves, in heart and in deed ; *in heart* : that is, you must heartily desire for your neighbor every blessing that you can lawfully desire for yourselves ; *in deed* : that is, you must do all in your power to procure for your neighbor the blessings which you desire for yourselves. Listen to the words of St. Augustine on this subject : “ Whosoever loves his neighbor as himself, desires for his neighbor the same blessings which he desires for himself, and procures for him, on every occasion, the same advantages which he procures for himself, if he can do so.” Take care not to inflict on your neighbor the evil you dread falling on yourselves. “ Do nothing to another which you would not wish him to do to you ;” on the contrary, treat others as you wish to be treated by them. Let us then examine some of your desires. Is it not true that you desire that others would forgive your faults and foibles, that they would console you in your troubles, encourage you in your difficulties, and extend a helping hand to you in your misfortune and misery ? Yes, you desire that such should be the case. Act thus then, with respect to your neighbors, and do to them, what under similar circumstances you would have them to do to you. You are indignant and unhappy when you are made the victim of treachery and crime, when your character is blackened by detraction and calumny, and a false construction put upon your actions ; and you heartily wish to escape being wounded by the poisoned tongue of slander. Be careful then to avoid committing against your neighbor these same crimes, which fill you with so much displeasure when committed against yourself. You will never injure your neighbor, by word or deed, if you love him as yourself, if charity reign in your hearts.

How happy, my Brethren, would we be if charity reigned on earth ! There would be found no more poor, no more miserable wretches ; the rich, being generous and benevolent, would relieve them

in their poverty, and comfort them in their misery; envy, avarice, hatred and anger would exist no more; every man would desire the happiness of his fellow being, and would rejoice at his prosperity; brothers would no longer despise one another, insult one another, or seek to undermine one another; a mutual esteem, love and desire to assist would animate all; among them there would be but one heart and one soul; and thus accomplishing God's law of love; the heavenly virtue of charity, after having worked their happiness here below, would introduce them into the abode of eternal delights, where those who will have known how to love as God commands, will dwell forever.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XL.

### THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD IN GENERAL.

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“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.—ST. MATTHEW, xix : 17.

IT is not sufficient for one to say in his heart: I love my God, I love my neighbor; God requires that this love should be reduced to practice, and manifest itself by acts, especially by a faithful observance of His holy law. “He who loves me,” says our Saviour, “keeps my Commandments; he who loves me not, keeps not my Commandments.” We love the Lord, and prove that we love Him by zealously fulfilling His adorable will. Come then, my Brethren, let us meditate together on the Law of God: it is this law that converts souls, that gives wisdom to little ones, that brings joys to the heart and light to the eyes.

Laws were given to man from the very commencement of the world. In creating man, the Lord God set before his eyes and in his heart a light, which enabled him to distinguish good from evil. Man was created in rectitude, and came from the hand of God, with happy inclinations to good, which rendered it easy for him to accomplish all his duties. Had he perseveringly walked in the innocence in

which he was created, he would have easily preserved the knowledge of all the obligations which his condition as a reasonable creature imposed upon him toward his Creator, toward himself and toward his neighbor. But he soon ceased to hear the law which God and his reason dictated. Soon too, the corruption of the heart bringing on that of the mind, this law was obscured, forgotten, and, as it were, blotted out by the power of sin and concupiscence. In this miserable state man needed to have recalled to his mind the Commandments which God had intimated to him at the moment of his creation. Nevertheless, the Lord deferred for a long time giving a written law to his chosen people, because there still existed a great many just men, who by their advice and good example, reminded them of the law they had to observe. But, after the long stay which the people of God had been compelled to make in idolatrous Egypt, it was to be feared that they would follow the example of infidel nations, would cease to adore the Creator, would substitute falsehood in place of the truth, and offer their incense to idols. So the Lord resolved to announce His word to "Jacob, His judgments and His Commandments to Israel," and His hand wrote the law of the Decalogue.

The Almighty calls His people from out the bondage of Egypt, and three months after their departure from this idolatrous land, the children of Israel arrive at the foot of Mount Sinai. The summit of the mountain is enveloped in clouds, a thick smoke rises to heaven, the whole appears on fire, the lightning flashes, the thunder peals, the sound of trumpets is heard on every side, and the voice of God comes forth from heaven, exclaiming: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not



covet thy neighbor's house: neither shalt thou desire his wife, nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his."

Behold, my Brethren, with what solemnity the Lord announces His divine will to His people. All this grand and majestic preparation tells us, who is here the legislator: it is the all-powerful and eternal God, the Lord of lords, the King of kings; and, by engraving His law on stone, He himself teaches us the esteem with which we ought to regard it, the respectful submission with which we ought to receive, and everywhere and always practice it.

Although these ten Commandments were given at first only to the people of Israel, yet you must not imagine that they were not also imposed upon us. To us, Christians, as well as to the Israelites, this holy law was given, for our divine Saviour tells us, that He came, not to abolish the law, but to fulfill and perfect it; and He adds: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." A young man comes to find Him and says to Him: "Good Master, what good shall I do, that I may have life everlasting?" Our meek Saviour answered him: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments. He saith to Him: which? And Jesus said: Thou shalt do no murder: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."\* These are exactly the Commandments of the ancient Decalogue. We are therefore obliged to observe this law, for it is the law of the Supreme Legislator, the Master of the world, the Creator and Judge of all men, we are then bound to observe the Decalogue, for the Lord did not come to revoke these divine Commandments, but on the contrary, He gave them a new force,—a new authority, and He declares that we can attain heaven only by walking in the way of these Commandments.

It is necessary to observe the Commandments to attain heaven. Take care, therefore, that you do not say with some heretics of our time, that it is impossible to fulfill these Commandments. To speak thus, is a blasphemy, for God declares that He commands us nothing that is above our strength.† It is an impiety, for our Saviour

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\* St. Matthew, xix: 16, 17, 18, 19.

† Deuteronomy, xxx: 11.

promises us His Holy Spirit to aid us in walking along the path of the Commandments.\* It is a heresy, for the Church declares, with St. Augustine, that God commands nothing that is impossible, but He bids us ask, however difficult the thing we undertake, and He will give us the power to accomplish it. God is too good, says the Apostle, ever to require of us any thing which is above our strength; the law of God does not issue from the throne of an unjust and severe tyrant, but from the throne of a tender father. If the kingdom of heaven is of difficult access, if the road to it is narrow, let us console ourselves and not lose courage, for each of us can say with the Apostle: "I can do every thing in God who strengthens me; His grace makes all things easy." The Word of truth and of life, Jesus Christ himself, has said that His yoke is sweet and his burden light. "Come to me," says He, "all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light.†" St. John, the beloved Apostle, tells us that "His Commandments are not heavy.‡" Love, and you will easily do what God commands you; pray, and you will be strong enough to fulfill His holy law. It is very true, that, were we dependent on our own weakness, we could not accomplish all the law of God requires of us; but ask, and you shall receive; the assistance of grace will never be wanting to you; God will grant it to him who sincerely desires and humbly seeks it. Keep the Commandments,—it is in your power to do so.

If you keep the Commandments, God promises you a great reward. Yes, says the prophet, "much will be given to him who keeps the law." To those who keep the law, God promises the possession of the kingdom of heaven after their death, and even in this life he loads them with favors and grants them all kinds of blessings. It is for them, that the "good, pressed down, shaken together and running over measure" is prepared. God acknowledges them, and treats them as His children: He hears their prayers, consoles them in their afflictions, assists them in their wants, aids them in danger, strengthens them in temptation, in a word, bestows

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\* *Ezekiel*, xxxvi: 27.    † *St. Matthew*, xi: 28, 29, 30.    ‡ *1 St. John*, v: 3.

upon them a profound and heartfelt peace, which is a foretaste of that they are destined one day to enjoy in heaven.

Let us apply ourselves continually, my Brethren, to meditate upon the holy law,—the divine Commandments of the Lord, which ought to be the rule of all our actions and conduct, and upon the fulfillment of which depends our happiness in this life, and in the life to come. Let us love this heavenly law,—let us love God who gave it to us. If we truly love we shall find the burden light and the yoke sweet, we shall carry it with joy, and with St. Augustine, will say: “Lord, give me grace to do what thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest.” And the grace will be granted to us, and our hearts will receive strength and wonderful energy. Should it, however, happen that the observance of the law appears burdensome to us, through our own weakness; should it happen that we experience pain in walking along the straight and narrow road which the hand of God has marked out for us, and in which Jesus, loaded with His cross, has preceded us, inviting us to follow Him: let us cast our eyes toward those eternal mansions, and remember that there a treasure infinitely rich awaits us,—God himself, who will be our reward exceedingly great; thus will we be inspired with new courage and strength to continue the combat, to run, as the Apostle expresses it, until we have attained the goal, and borne off the prize of eternal life. Heaven awaits him, who on earth will have done the will of the Lord.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XLI.

### FIRST COMMANDMENT.

## ADORATION OF GOD.

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“Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”—Exodus, xx: 3.

CHRISTIANS, we are all obliged to observe the precepts of the Decalogue, for our divine Saviour has said to us: “If thou wilt enter



into life, keep the Commandments." Refuse not then to take upon yourselves this yoke, for it is the yoke of the Lord, and it is sweet and light. Shrink not from the holy law of God, our Father; it will be always easy for you to follow and practice it, if you are careful to ask the assistance of grace, which the divine Goodness will never refuse to prayer well made. Let us therefore examine to-day what the First Commandment of God ordains, and what it forbids: "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt not have strange gods before me: thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing, thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them. One God alone shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve."

What then does God command by this First Commandment: "the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." He commands us to render to himself the worship of adoration which is due to Him, and to love Him with our whole heart: that is, my Brethren, we must believe that God is the Creator and sovereign Master of all things; we must place in Him all our confidence, give Him all our love, and consecrate all the powers of our soul to Him, as to the Being who alone can make us truly happy, by communicating to us infinite wealth in the possession of his own adorable goodness and beauty. Such is the worship of adoration which the heavenly Father requires His children to render to Him, and which essentially consists in the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, charity and religion.

By faith, we rise to the knowledge of the infinite majesty of God, and we honor and adore His veracity, by holding as true every thing He has been pleased to reveal to the world. By hope, we place an entire confidence in God, and, by this confidence, recognize and adore His omnipotence,—we honor and adore His fidelity in promises. Charity makes us love God above all things, and, by thus loving Him, we honor His sovereign bounty, and render to Him a true and perfect adoration. In fine, by the virtue of religion, we revere and adore the excellence of the divine Being, we acknowledge that He is the sovereign Ruler, the supreme Lord of all things; this is the virtue which regulates the respect which is due to Him, and to every thing which is consecrated to His worship.

We have a body and a soul, and we have received both one and

the other from the bounty of God: we must therefore render to God a twofold adoration,—the adoration of the soul, and the adoration of the body:—interior and exterior worship.

If, penetrated with a holy respect, your heart humbles itself before the supreme Majesty; if it rejoices in the contemplation of the infinite perfections of the sovereign Master; if it glorifies the grandeur, the power, and the bounty of its God; if, from the bottom of your soul, you acknowledge that the Lord is the source of all good, that you have received all from His beneficent hand, your soul, your body, your whole being;—that you depend upon God for all things: if such are your thoughts and sentiments, you render to God true homage, interior adoration, that of the soul and of the heart, which is so pleasing to the Almighty. This adoration you can render to Him at all times, in all places, and under every circumstance, by the motions of a devout and submissive heart, ever devoted to His service, and filled with the thought of His divine presence.

If, to the homage of the heart you join that of words, signs, or outward demonstrations, which evince the sentiments of veneration which you have in your soul, such for instance as the act of kneeling, of prostrating yourselves, of elevating your hands and eyes toward heaven, then you render to God both *interior and exterior* adoration,—the adoration of the body united with that of the soul. But if, while you outwardly adore God, while you are prostrate before His holy altar, and your mouth pronounces the accustomed form of prayer, you do not adore God from the bottom of your heart, what is your adoration? You honor Him with your lips, but your heart is far from Him. Of what avail then is this adoration? It is vain and useless, says our Saviour; for it is the homage of the heart that God demands,—the homage of confidence and love. Is not this what we require of other men? Do we not reckon as nothing mere outside show? We demand a love that is cordial, and we reject those demonstrations of friendship which the heart belies; we desire that our friends should love us sincerely. But, my Brethren, is not our God called the God of the heart? Do not therefore, suppose that He will be satisfied with mere appearances; He requires that our soul be united with our body for adoration; and if only our body bend, while the soul remains inattentive and

refuses its homage, the Lord pronounces us hypocrites and liars. We must then adore God in spirit and in truth : such is the worship which He exacts of us, and which the first precept of the Decalogue enjoins. Let us now see what this same Commandment prohibits.

It prohibits *idolatry* and *superstition*. The sin of idolatry consists in transferring to the creature or to vain idols, the homage and adoration which are due only to the sovereign majesty of God.

When the Jews were about being carried away captives to Babylon, the prophet addressed them in these words : "But now, you shall see in Babylon gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles. Beware therefore that you imitate not the doings of others, and be afraid, and the fear of them should seize upon you. But when you shall see the multitude behind and before, adoring them, say you in your hearts : Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord."\* And we also, my Brethren, ought often to say : "Thou alone, O Lord, oughtest to be adored ;" for we are in this world, and what is the world, but a vast Babylon, given up to the worship of idols ? It is true, people do not adore men like themselves, they do not worship idols of wood or stone, they do not practice the gross idolatry of paganism, —but is there not another kind of idolatry in their hearts ? Alas ! how great is the number of the senseless men who refuse to adore God, who idolize themselves, and who pass their whole lives adoring pride, vanity, gold and silver, sensual pleasures, impurity, gluttony and drunkenness ! These are the divinities to which these people prostitute their incense and their adoration. Oh ! shun this criminal idolatry, and, mindful of God, say to Him from the bottom of your hearts : "Thou alone, O Lord, oughtest to be adored."

There are rules which the Church has appointed to be observed in her sacred worship, and from which it is never lawful to depart. Always wise in her aims, she wishes to avoid the inconvenience of arbitrary practices which would disturb the beautiful uniformity, that beautiful harmony which she desires so much should prevail in all her august ceremonies. Now, you fall into superstition, if you deviate from these principles, and employ in religion certain unauthorized customs. Thus you are guilty of superstition, and you

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\* Baruch, vi : 3, 4, 5.



commit sin, if you believe that by reciting such and such prayers, a certain number of times, at such an hour, or in such a place, you will be cured of the sickness by which you are afflicted, or that you will recover the property you may have lost. You are guilty of superstition, and you commit sin, if you prefer the worship of the saints to that of God; if you have a presumptuous confidence in their protection; if you take it on yourself to violate any of the Commandments, vainly trusting in some practice of devotion you may have adopted. You are guilty of superstition, and you commit sin, if you observe certain days as unfortunate, certain circumstances as bad omens; if you consult fortune-tellers, or pretended sooth-sayers, to learn from them future things, to discover stolen goods, or any thing of the kind. Know that this is an attack on the rights of God, who reserves to himself the knowledge of those future events which depend on the action of free agents.

Avoid superstition, God commands you to shun it. But, at the same time, be on your guard against those infidels so numerous in our day, who treat as superstitions the greater part of our dogmas and sacred ceremonies. There never will be superstition in the practices and devotions taught and sanctioned by the Church of Jesus Christ; it is God who enlightens and directs her, and He will be with her all days, even to the consummation of ages.

Let us take the resolution to observe faithfully what the First Commandment of the Lord ordains, and to avoid carefully what it forbids. Let us constantly walk in the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, charity and religion. Let us place our trust in the goodness and providence of the Lord our God, who perpetually watches over us, and takes us under His Fatherly protection. Let us adore our God, and let us adore none but Him; let us render to Him true worship,—the worship of the heart, the soul and mind; let us be submissive to His holy will, and seek to comply with it, in all things and under all circumstances, that we may merit the recompense which the Lord promises to those who shall faithfully persevere to the end, and which I sincerely wish you all from my whole heart.—AMEN.

## SERMON XLII.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

## INVOCATION OF SAINTS.

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“Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”—EXODUS, xx: 3.

THE worship which we must render to God, is that of a sincere adoration,—it is the worship of the soul and of the mind, of the heart and of the body. We fulfill this holy duty perfectly, when we practice the virtues of faith, hope, charity and religion. You adore the Lord, your God, and you adore Him alone. But, my Brethren, we honor and invoke the Angels and the Saints; we even honor their images and relics. Is this a lawful worship? We are going to see that the law of God does not prohibit it. We have, in fact, already seen a proof of it in the beautiful salutation addressed by the angel to Mary.

We honor and invoke the Saints; we honor their images and relics; is this permitted? My Brethren, the law of God does not forbid it. There is a vast difference between the worship which we render to God and that which we pay to the Saints. We render to God the worship of adoration, whereas we honor the Saints only with an inferior and subordinate worship, as beings who are infinitely below God, who are His creatures, but His friends, and our protectors in heaven. It is from God alone that we expect every good and perfect gift, for He alone is the author of grace,—He alone can bestow grace; hence, when we address God, we say: “Lord, have mercy on us; Lord, hear us.” But when we invoke the Saints, we say: “Pray for us,” and we ask that they would unite their supplications with ours,—that they would support our prayers with the influence and power which they possess as the friends of God, to whose prayers, no doubt, He grants His graces and blessings much more freely than to ours, sinners as we are. It is not there-

fore from the Saints that we expect directly to receive the favors of heaven, but from God through their mediation. It is not even through their prayers that we hope to attain the object of our petitions, but through the merits of Jesus Christ, to whom they themselves are indebted for the degree of glory which they have attained. No, my Brethren, we do not adore the Saints, we adore none but God; but we honor them, because such is the will of God; we pray to them and invoke their prayers, because the Holy Ghost leads us to do so. He says to us in the holy Council of Trent: "That the Saints who reign with Jesus Christ offer to God their prayers for men; that it is good and useful to invoke them in an humble manner, and to fly to their aid and succor to obtain the favors of God, through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is our Saviour and Redeemer."

Yes, it is good and useful to invoke the Saints, for God takes pleasure in giving what they ask. He has innumerable times granted the greatest favors to their prayers, and particularly to the powerful intercession of the blessed Virgin. Why therefore should we not have confidence in the prayers of the Saints? Why should we not rely on their protection, and expect from them powerful assistance in our weakness and misery? Are they not the friends of God? Are they not, like ourselves, children of the Church, and members of that body of which Jesus Christ is the head? Are they not our brethren, and have they ceased to love us, because they are happy in heaven? No, no, my Brethren, they do not cease to offer to the Lord golden censers filled with the odors of their prayers and ours.

But by invoking the Saints do we not offer an injury to the mediation of Jesus Christ? No, since He himself teaches us by the organ of His Church, that it is good and useful to have recourse to their intercession. While invoking the Saints, we do not cease to acknowledge that our divine Jesus is our sole Mediator with His eternal Father, and we profess that it is only through His infinite merits that the Saints are what they are, and can obtain what they ask.

My Brethren, honor and invoke the Saints, and you will make yourselves agreeable to God and to His divine Son, who was pleased to glorify them among us by the numerous miracles which they



wrought in His name. But above all, honor and invoke Mary, the holy Mother of God, the Queen of heaven, for her divine Son has placed in her hands an immense treasure of power and mercy.

It is good, it is useful to honor and invoke the Saints ; but do not confine your devotion to themselves, honor also their holy relics and images. Why should you not do so ? Is it not true, that we preserve with affection and respect what belonged to a cherished and revered friend ? The piece of furniture, the book which belonged to my father or my mother, I preserve with a tender and respectful remembrance. We embalm the bodies of distinguished men ; we receive and hold in great veneration the lifeless remains of heroes, and of those who were illustrious in the arts and sciences. When Moses left Egypt, he carried with him the bones of the patriarch Joseph, to whose memory we also find that his brethren erected a tomb in the promised land. Thus also the primitive Christians collected and preserved with a holy respect the blood and bodies of martyrs. The torn garments, the earth on which their blood had fallen, in a word, any thing belonging to them or connected with their combat, were kept with a pious care and respect in the houses of Christians, or placed on the altars of churches. They erected magnificent temples over the tombs of martyrs,—over these holy men, who have purpled with their blood the crown of the Church.

We honor the relics of the Saints,—we preserve them with veneration, and in doing so, we are supported, as you have seen, by the impulses of the human heart, and by the practice of every age and of every country. We are also defended by the authority of the Church. The Church has always manifested a profoundly religious respect for the bodies and relics of the Saints ; because these Saints have been, as it were, the victims of God by their martyrdom or by their penance, the living members of Jesus Christ, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the instruments whom God had selected and employed to spread abroad the splendor of His glory. Beside, my Brethren, the miracles which God has worked through the relics of the Saints, authorize the practice of the Church in so convincing a manner that it is impossible to find any thing better established. The sacred Scriptures itself tells us that a dead body recovered life by simply touching the bones of the prophet Eliseus. We read in

the Acts of the Apostles, that "God wrought special miracles" by the hand of Paul. "So that even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them."\* Should we not then honor what God honors and glorifies so much? Beside, confidence in the Saints, and in their holy relics, is too universal to be open to any suspicion of fraud, and too deeply rooted in the hearts of men for heresy or impiety ever to eradicate it.

My Brethren, it is said in the Decalogue: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them."† Do not these words condemn the respect and veneration which we render to images? No; for they do not absolutely prohibit the making of images, but only the making of images for the purpose of adoring them; they do not forbid all honor and marks of respect to statues, pictures and images, but they condemn all homage paid to idols. But I appeal to yourselves,—when you venerate sacred images, do you adore them? Oh, no; you know too well that God and His Church would condemn you, were your worship to stop with the images themselves; were you, for example, to pay to the statue of the blessed Virgin, or to that of any other Saint, the supreme worship which belongs only to God. But, on the contrary, God and His Church commend your devotion, when you venerate, as the Holy Ghost teaches you, the cross, the images of our Saviour, of the blessed Virgin and of the Saints, because then your worship is free from all idolatry and from all superstition. Instructed in the school of the Church of Jesus Christ, you honor and venerate these images, because they recall to your minds recollections dear to your hearts. You never think of attributing to these images any divine power or virtue; you ask nothing from them, you place no confidence in them; but the honor which you pay them, you wish to refer to those holy spirits, of whom these images are intended as representations. You kiss them, you kneel before them, but it is your Lord whom you adore, it is His saints whom you venerate when you do so. Herein you but imitate the child that imprints a kiss of love

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\* Acts, xix: 11, 12.

† Exodus, xx: 4, 5.

on its father's or mother's portrait. No one surely who has a heart and knows how to love, would condemn it for acting thus. My dear Brethren, do not forget this instruction, and in your devotion and in the honor which you render to the Saints, to their images, and to their holy relics, avoid all superstition,—all idolatry. Never depart from the teachings of the Church; respect and honor the Saints, but in such a manner that the honor and the worship which are due to God may thereby suffer no prejudice; honor them so, that your worship may be agreeable to the Saints themselves, and useful and salutary to your souls. Remember that the best, the most useful, and the most acceptable worship which you can offer the Saints, consists in the faithful and constant imitation of the virtues which they practiced. Compassion, love of God and love of their neighbor, patience, resignation and purity, have conducted them to the happiness of heaven. You must walk in the same way: enter then on this path, and pray devoutly to the Saints that you may persevere in it. They also will then pray for you, they will obtain for you abundant graces, and you will accomplish the holy will of God in all things: your recompense will be eternal bliss.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XLIII.

### SECOND COMMANDMENT.

#### ON TAKING THE LORD'S NAME.

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“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”—Exodus, xx: 7.

To God alone belongs the worship of adoration, for He is the sovereign Master of heaven and earth, and it would be a great crime to transfer this worship to any creature. It is true, we bend and prostrate ourselves before the images of the saints, in the presence



of their bones ; we honor and invoke the saints, but we carefully abstain from adoring them. This worship is free from all idolatry and superstition ; God approves of it, and the infallible Church declares that it is good, useful and salutary. Such, my Brethren, is a summary of our last instruction. To-day I commence the explanation of the second precept of the Decalogue.

At the invocation of the thrice holy name of the Lord, prodigies are wrought, miracles are effected, the powers of hell tremble, angels rejoice, courage revives in the heart of man, and consolation and hope return to the soul of the unfortunate.

We feel naturally impelled to invoke this adorable name, and in danger and affliction we exclaim : O my God ! A natural inclination moves us to call upon the name of the Lord, to obtain thereby aid and assistance ; a natural inclination also leads us to call upon the name of the Lord to confirm the truth of our words, or the sincerity of our promises. Is this inclination good, proper and praiseworthy ? Yes, if it be regulated and kept within just bounds. Is it therefore permitted to swear, to take an oath, to call God to witness ? Swearing, or the act of taking an oath, so far from being bad in its nature, is, on the contrary, an act of religion, an act of homage rendered to the majesty of God and to His infinite perfections. You call to witness that God from whose piercing eyes nothing can escape, who discovers even the most secret thoughts of our hearts, and discerns in an instant the truth or the falsehood of every thing that issues from our mouth : you therefore proclaim the infinite knowledge of God ; you render homage to His immutable justice ; and you submit yourselves to the judgment of Him who is the all-powerful protector of innocence, the sovereign judge, and the supreme avenger of all falsehood and all injustice.

The holiest saints and even God himself have made use of oaths. It is therefore impossible to doubt that an oath may be lawful. So the Decalogue does not say to us absolutely : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God ;" but it says to us : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The law of God requires that great discretion should be used in taking oaths, and that we should have recourse to them only when there exists a real necessity ; it demands, above all, that we should never employ oaths unless they be conformable to truth and to the ends of justice.

God said: "And thou shalt swear: As the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice."\* An oath therefore must be made *in truth*. What you affirm on oath must be true, and while you swear it, you must believe that the thing is such as you affirm it to be. If you bind yourself to any thing by an oath, you must be firmly resolved to discharge your engagement with fidelity and at the specified time.

An oath must be taken *with judgment*; that is to say, we should not take an oath on every light and trifling occasion, without necessity or without reflection; but with prudence, discretion, and after mature consideration. Therefore, before you take an oath, first always carefully examine whether necessity oblige you to the act, and whether the thing be sufficiently important to deserve being attested in so solemn a manner.

An oath must be made *with justice*; by which I mean, that the object of the oath, or the thing affirmed, should be just, reasonable, honest and equitable; otherwise you sin by swearing, and you also sin by fulfilling your oath. "An oath should never subserve iniquity, says St. Jerome.

Truth, judgment and justice; these are the conditions of an oath, and if these are wanting to it, it is always sinful, and becomes then a perjury and not an oath. "If an oath be without truth, it is false; if without judgment, it is indiscreet; if without justice, it is pernicious," says St. Thomas.

"Refrain from oaths," says St. Augustine, "except when you are compelled to have recourse to them. It is difficult to swear right, and always criminal to swear falsely." The Holy Ghost says: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing: for in it there are many falls. And let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth. A man that sweareth much, shall be filled with iniquity; and a scourge shall not depart from his house, and it shall be filled with his punishment."\* Avoid therefore, my Brethren, taking the name of the Lord your God in vain; dread the sin of perjury, for in the sight of God it is a heinous crime, and His supreme justice will one day punish it in the severest manner.

But this is not all that the Second Commandment forbids. It

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\* Jeremias, iv: 2.

† Ecclesiasticus, xxiii: 9, 10, 12.

also prohibits those dreadful imprecations which you utter against yourselves and others. Your mouth is filled with maledictions ; unfortunate man ! Do you not know that God sometimes permits that he who curses his neighbor in the bitterness of his soul should be heard ? You wish the death of your wife or your children ; God, to punish you, will take them from this world at the time when you most need their services. In times of anger, you break out into curses on your cattle, against every thing that surrounds you ; God will not allow these sins to go unpunished ; the curse will fall upon your stock, on your furniture, on your land, and on every thing that belongs to you. Be cautious therefore, my Brethren, the law of God forbids these maledictions and evil wishes, and whoever becomes guilty of them, insults the adorable name of God.

Blasphemy is another sin opposed to the Second Commandment. Blasphemy, or words injurious to God, to the saints, or to religion ; alas ! how many people in the world blaspheme ! How many have the audacity to attribute to God what is repugnant to His divine nature ; how many accuse Him of injustice, of blindness, of indifference, and sacrilegiously outrage His divine perfections ! How many too, impiously deny to God what belongs to Him ! Thus they blaspheme, who dare assert that God does not take care of His creatures, while our divine Lord Jesus Christ assures us, that not even a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without the permission of our heavenly Father ! How many people there are who dare speak of the divine attributes with contempt, with raillery and insult ! How many unworthy Christians associate the holy name of God with words, which when joined to it form a most horrible blasphemy ! But I will speak more at length on this dreadful sin at some future time. All I will say about it to-day is, that God abominates blasphemy ; avoid this crime then, and whenever you hear any one blaspheming, bless and glorify the holy name of God in your heart, and offer a short prayer.

But, my Brethren, it is not enough for us to avoid taking the name of God in vain, we are moreover bound to honor it. You fulfill this precept, and honor the name of the Lord your God, when you pray to Him, when you sing His praises with true sentiments of devotion. You honor the name of God, when you thank Him for His blessings, and say with the royal prophet : “ Bless the Lord,



O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name.”\* You honor the name of God, when you have recourse to Him in your wants, and resign yourself to His holy will.

You honor the name of God, when you are careful to refer to His glory all your thoughts, your desires and works, when you place yourself under His all-powerful protection, when your intention is sincerely to act in His name, and to walk in the practice of good works, that you may thereby please Him.

You honor the name of God, when you faithfully accomplish the vows you have made. The Holy Ghost says: “If thou hast vowed any thing to God, defer not to pay it: for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him: but whatever thou hast vowed, pay it: and it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised.”† For by violating your vows, you fail in the promise you made to God, which is in some manner to manifest a desire to deceive Him, and to become guilty of a lie, and of a kind of injustice to Him.

Let me conjure you, by the interest I take in your salvation, never abuse the name of God. Refrain not only from gross swearing, from those shocking profanations of the Lord’s name, but also from every oath that is not necessary, from every expression which might be taken as an oath, and from every word that is disrespectful to God.

Let us speak of God only to bless and honor Him, and thereby induce others to serve Him. Let His name be hallowed both by our words and actions; may the holy name of this God of goodness and mercy be blessed, who has done so much to make himself be loved by us! My Brethren, let us love God, and we will respect Him; let us love Him, and we will honor Him; let us love Him, and He will love us; He will come to us, and He will receive us one day into the society of the angels and saints, where we will praise, bless and glorify Him for everlasting ages.—AMEN.

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\* Psalms, cii: 1.

† Ecclesiastes, v: 3, 4.

## SERMON XLIV.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

## ON THE SIN OF PROFANITY.

“He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die.”—LEVITICUS, xxiv: 16.

THE holy Scriptures tell us that at the sound of the sacred name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven, on earth and in hell. They likewise assure us that there is no other name given to men whereby they can be saved.\* Is it not but too true that there is no other name which will cause the damnation of so many, by the profane and blasphemous use which they make of it? To it may well be applied the prophetic words of Simeon, that it is set up for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. How little people reflect on this? In truth, the number of those who blaspheme this sacred name seems to increase every day. God grant, my Brethren, that I may have the happiness of making you rightly comprehend the horrid nature of the sin of blasphemy, and how much you ought to dread loading your consciences with it. This is what I propose to do in the present instruction.

He who blasphemes commits a sacrilege. A sacrilege is the profanation of a holy thing. Now what more holy than the name of the Lord? He himself says, “From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name is great among the gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.”† The blasphemer does not respect and adore, on the contrary, he profanes and insults this holy name. He is therefore guilty of sacrilege.

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\* Acts, iv: 12.

† Malachias, i: 11.

He who blasphemes is guilty of impiety. By impiety, is understood the contempt of God, or of a holy thing; and to live in impiety, is at the same time to be destitute of religion, to be careless of salvation, and to glory in sin. I now ask the blasphemer, how great is the injury he offers to God, whom he curses by his blasphemy? What kind of religion has that man, who from morning till night, has the audacity to treat his God as he would not dare treat the meanest wretch on earth? What does he care for his salvation, when he so constantly inflicts on his own soul mortal wounds, heaps crime upon crime on his conscience, and glories in his wickedness, which he commits so boldly and so openly? The blasphemer is therefore guilty of impiety; and I will add, without weakening the force of what I have already said, that the blasphemer is a madman.

For, must not that person be mad who consents to lose the greatest of all blessings, and exposes himself to infinite pains,—to eternal torments, without receiving any profit or advantage from his crime? But the blasphemer, by his criminal conduct, loses heaven and deserves hell; for that is the place to which his blasphemies bring him. Tell me now what advantage does the blasphemer derive from the commission of these awful sins? I tell the drunkard that he will lose his soul, but he replies that he has at least the pleasure of drinking, and thereby drowns his sorrows and gratifies his appetite. I say to the sensualist, that, if he persist in his wickedness, he can never see God; but he answers me: let us rejoice and be merry while we have time. Blasphemer, I come to warn you on the part of God that you are damning your soul, that it will be forever excluded from heaven, and that it will have to suffer an eternity of torments in the flames of hell. What will you then have gathered from all your blasphemies? How foolish you are to renounce unutterable happiness and to rush into endless woes, by continuing to commit a sin,—an awful sin, which procures you neither gain, nor profit, nor pleasure; unless perhaps you take pleasure in committing sin, unless you commit it for the mere delight of doing so, which I cannot believe, for that is the peculiar disposition of the devil, and I recoil from the idea that you would wish to make yourself like to him. But what I am compelled to admit is, that you show more ingratitude to God than the very demons. I descend in spirit into the abyss of hell, and I hear



a multitude of criminals blaspheming the holy name of God. I ask them why they utter these horrid insults and maledictions against a God infinitely holy. Their sole reply is to point to the flames which consume them. I understand them: they blaspheme, because God punishes them in the most excruciating manner. I return to earth, and hear the same imprecations and same blasphemies which I heard in hell. Why, I exclaim, do you dare blaspheme your God? Ah! miserable wretch, why do you blaspheme Him? He has created you to His own image and likeness; He endowed you with an immortal soul, capable of knowing, loving and serving Him; He gave you His only beloved Son, the object of His complacency, who, through His love for you,—to deliver you from hell and open the gates of heaven for you, chose to die on the cross. He spares you, does not punish you as you deserve, offers you forgiveness, provided you turn from your evil ways. Such is the conduct of God in your regard, full of goodness and mercy; and, although He has bestowed upon you so many blessings, yet, ungrateful wretch as you are, like the reprobates in hell, you blaspheme His adorable name! I tell you, for it is the truth, you resemble the reprobate during life; you will share their torments for eternity. How can it be supposed that God will admit into his eternal kingdom, to sing His praises with the saints and angels, those who, during their entire lives, have done nothing but curse and blaspheme His holy name? My Brethren, every one will go into his own country: heaven belongs to the true children of God, and hell will be the last home of blasphemers.

If you do not wish to perish, and perish forever, you who blaspheme, be converted from your evil ways, and change your lives. And, to correct your habit of swearing and blaspheming, go to the root of the evil. Whence do these sins arise? From quickness of temper, from anger and passion. Control then the violence of your temper, and whenever you feel yourselves carried away by a sudden fit of impatience, impose silence on your tongue; and should some guilty words escape your lips, inflict some penance on yourself; and continue to do so, until the habit be entirely eradicated. My dear Brethren, give some little charity to the poor every time you have the misfortune to curse, or swear, or blaspheme, and you will soon correct yourselves of the evil, and instead of blasphemy, the words

of holy Job will be on your lips : "Blessed be the name of the Lord forever !"

But is it enough to destroy this sin in yourselves ? No ; you ought also seek to destroy it in all those over whom you have control ; you must use all your authority to prevent them also from insulting God. Are your children guilty of it ? reprove them seriously, and if they relapse, chastise them. Do your domestics and servants blaspheme ? give them time to root out this sinful habit ; but if you see that they make no improvement, dismiss them, and rid your house of the presence of those enemies of God, who are a scandal to you and your children. But what must you do when you hear those over whom you have no control blaspheming ? Pray for them, my dear Brethren, and from the bottom of your hearts praise God, and repeat those words of the Lord's Prayer : "Hallowed be Thy name," O my God !

There is no crime, says St. Chrysostom, greater than blasphemy. The tongue of the blasphemer is a dagger which pierces the heart of God ; a sword, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, which cuts it to pieces. Blasphemy is even a more grievous crime than apostasy, says St. Jerome. They who blaspheme God in His glory, cries out St. Augustine, sin more grievously than they who crucified Him on earth.

My Brethren, fly this detestable sin, which is so injurious to the awful majesty of God. Employ with the utmost care all the means necessary to preserve yourselves from it, as well as from profane oaths, which, though less criminal than blasphemy, still insult the holy name of God, which angels and men should never speak of but to adore. Fly, oh, fly the occasions of this sin, anger, drunkenness, and the company of those who commit it. Every morning, make a sincere and firm resolution not to curse or blaspheme that day. Impose upon yourselves some penance every time you have the misfortune to fall into these crimes : for example, instantly beg pardon of God, give some alms to the poor, recite some prayer, practice some mortification. Beg of God every day to grant you the grace to make a holy use of your tongue, and say to him : Lord, may my tongue cleave to my mouth, rather than that I should make use of it to offend Thee, to insult Thy holy name ! Thou hast given it to me to glorify Thee, and may I never employ it but for this

end, so that having blessed Thy adorable name, and sung Thy praises on earth, I may have the happiness to see, to praise and to bless Thee for ever in heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XLV.

### THIRD COMMANDMENT.

## SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

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“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.”—Exodus, xx: 8.

THE Church of Jesus Christ, instructed and guided in all she does by the Holy Ghost, for good reasons has judged it proper to consecrate to God the first day of the week, which we call Sunday, or the Lord's day, instead of the Sabbath, or last day of the week, which the old law appointed to be sanctified. It was on Sunday that God commenced to create the world; it was on Sunday that Jesus Christ came forth glorious from the tomb, and opened for us the way to eternal life by his resurrection; it was on Sunday that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and on Sunday that they began to preach the Gospel. Such, my Brethren, are the great mysteries which took place on the first day of the week. To preserve the memory of them, the Apostles transferred to Sunday the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, and appointed the first day of the week to be the day of rest. We ought then to spend this day piously, in a way pleasing to God, abstaining from every thing forbidden by Him, and executing every thing which He prescribes. To-day then, I will speak to you on what we are forbidden to do on the Sunday.

What does the Third Commandment of God forbid? “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.” On Sundays and festivals of precept, we ought to abstain from all servile works. Not that these works are bad in themselves, or unworthy of Christians,



but they prevent us from applying ourselves to the worship of God, and from those works of piety, in which these days ought to be wholly employed. But what is meant by servile works? By servile works, we mean all exercise of the functions of any trade or business wherein the body works more than the mind, whether with a view to salary and payment, or only for pleasure, without intending to derive any emolument from them, as a man might do who would employ his time in slight mechanical works, merely for his own amusement. These things can not be lawfully done on Sundays and holy days of obligation, because they require external labor, wherein the body works more than the mind.

Nevertheless, my Brethren, God, full of goodness for his children, and compassionating their wants, permits them to work on Sundays when they are urged thereto by piety or charity, or when they are obliged to do so through necessity. Public necessity authorizes labor on holy days: this necessity excuses mail carriers, messengers, sailors, and all others employed in the public service. The urgent necessity of your neighbor is a legitimate cause for laboring on holy days: thus, you can contribute on Sundays to save your neighbor's property if it is in danger of destruction; you can go to the assistance of the sick and the poor. Sometimes also, your own necessity will render it lawful for you to labor on the Lord's day; but to avoid sin herein, these conditions are required: first, that the necessity be a real, urgent, and admitted by persons of prudence and judgment: secondly, that you obtain permission from your ecclesiastical superior; for it belongs to ecclesiastical superiors to govern the people in all spiritual things, and consequently it is for them to judge whether the necessity be then true, legitimate, and sufficient to dispense with the obligation of the precept. You must not however forget that when you are permitted to work on those days, you are not hereby dispensed from hearing Mass, or from attending to the other exercises of piety, which it is in your power to practice. It is our bounden duty to sanctify the Sunday: to reconcile this duty with your occupations, if you are compelled by necessity to work, convert your work into a means of sanctifying this holy day; more frequently recall to mind the presence of God; offer Him your trouble and fatigue, and accept them in the spirit of penance; work no more than is absolutely necessary, and so dispose of the rest of

the day that you may employ it in religious exercises and pious works, so that your conscience will bear you this testimony, that you have done all that was in your power to fulfill the commandment of God.

But, my Brethren, beware that cupidity and an immoderate desire of acquiring money do not induce you to regard as necessary, works which are neither lawful nor excusable, and which may easily be deferred to another day. Do not suppose that you will derive any real profit from servile works, which, undertaken without necessity, desecrate the Lord's day; such as these never will profit you; God does not bless them; on the contrary, you must expect from Him to be chastised for them, since by thus dishonoring your religion, you give occasion for the sneers and impieties of the blasphemer. How can you suppose that the Lord will bless works which He prohibits and condemns? Should you not rather believe that He will curse them, and cause to melt in your hands the sinful profits which you derived from them. But you tell me that you do prosper: you are then much more to be pitied, for the Almighty is preparing for you punishments infinitely more terrible in the world to come. These transgressions will not remain unpunished; "His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee."\* "The day of reckoning will surely come, and unless you do penance, you shall perish." O man! O child of God! Work during six days, as your heavenly Father hath done, with the same holiness, and like Him rest on the seventh. The six days of labor are the image of your life, the seventh day is the image of your eternity: here pain, there rest; here momentary trouble, there eternal repose. Ah! surely the least we can do, is to employ exclusively one day of the week in the great, the only important affair for which we came into this world! What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Think well on it, my Brethren. "If God has ordered Christians," says St. Augustine, "to rest on Sundays, and to leave off their temporal affairs on this holy day, that they may devote themselves to Him, and more easily apply themselves to divine things, according to these words: 'take time and consider

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\* Ecclesiasticus, v : 9.

that I am God ;' they who labor and occupy themselves in works which God forbids, despising His exhortation, have great reason to fear that He should say to them : ' I know thee not,' and that they will be rejected by him, because they neglected to seek Him when they had it in their power to do so." "Blessed is the man," says the prophet Isaias, "that doeth this; that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, that keepeth his hands from doing any evil."\*

There are two kinds of servile works from which we ought to abstain. Some are innocent or indifferent, and others are criminal. The former are bodily works, and the exercise of toilsome and laborious trades whose only end is temporal gain; the latter are sins, and all such actions as are hardly ever done without sin: these are truly servile works, for he who commits them, becomes the slave of sin; these are truly servile works, and their twofold wages are death and hell. If Christians offend God by laboring at corporal works without necessity, on Sundays or holy days, they become still more guilty when they spend these days in sin; not that it is allowed to sin on other days, but because sin is especially opposed to the sanctification of the Sunday. Man is, in truth, much more particularly bound to honor and adore the Lord on Sundays than on week days. Yet what has been established by God to nourish piety, says Tertullian, becomes an occasion of sin, and the Lord's day becomes the devil's day, by the sins wherewith it is profaned. In country places, where the Almighty unceasingly furnishes proofs of His almighty power and goodness, men spend the week days in comparative innocence; but, alas! the Sunday is too often given over to crime and debauchery. What other day are drinking saloons more frequented? on what other day are greater excesses committed? What day of the week is there more evil speaking, more calumnies, quarrels and blasphemies? What other day do people abandon themselves more to impurity, lascivious dances, wicked plays, immodest discourses and songs, and other things which I would not dare to mention. "Alas!" exclaims St. Augustine, "it would be better for us were there no Sundays, and that every day were working days, than to see the Sundays so awfully prostituted to sin, to see Christians on those holy days give them-

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\* Isaias, lvi : 2.



selves up, body and soul, to every species of libertinism and licentiousness." Oh! how great must be the guilt of those who abandon themselves to sin on the very days which they ought to devote entirely to God; which they ought to spend wholly in His worship, in thanksgiving for His benefits, and in advancing their sanctification and salvation!

My Brethren, let us take the firm resolution to-day, henceforth to spend the Sundays as God commands and our salvation requires. Let us resolve, not only to abstain during these holy days from every servile, every forbidden work, but above all, from sin and from every thing that may lead us to sin. Yes, let us take this good resolution, so that the Sundays, which God requires us to make days of salvation, may not become for us days of perdition. No doubt, all amusement is not prohibited on this day, but only such amusement is allowed as will not injure innocence,—moderate amusement, taken with restraint. We should never forget that Sundays are not days of pleasure, destined to be employed in profane and dangerous pastimes, but days consecrated to the pure and holy joy of the children of God; that he who commits sin on these days, makes them feasts of the devil and not feasts of Jesus Christ. Adopt the salutary custom of often thinking of God, of your soul, of eternity and salvation; you will soon find that, when Sunday comes, your hearts will be naturally inclined to religious exercises; they will become easy to you; you will delight to assist at all the public devotions in your church, at high Mass, Vespers, and the different instructions given on that day. They will be to you a source of happiness and of consolation, such as true Christian souls experience; those real consolations which far surpass the false joys of this world. And thus having faithfully served your Lord on earth, and kept holy the day of rest, you will one day enter into the eternal rest which He has prepared for you in heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON XLVI.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.  
(CONTINUED.)

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“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.”—EXODUS, xx: 8.

THE third precept of the Decalogue forbids us to perform on Sundays servile or corporal works, that is, works in the performance of which the body has a greater share than the mind, and which tend directly to the advantage of the body. But to sanctify the Sunday, is it enough to abstain from all labor? No; for this holy day ought not to be a time of fruitless rest like that of the tomb, the body ought to rest only to increase the activity of the soul. What then must we do to satisfy this precept? “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.” The answer to this question will furnish the matter for the present instruction.

The rest of the Sunday is a holy rest. It was established to recall to our minds the repose of God after the work of creation was accomplished, the repose of Jesus Christ after His resurrection and entrance into His glory, and the eternal repose which we all one day hope to enjoy in the kingdom of heaven. You can realize these views only by employing the quiet repose of the Sunday in the service of God. The Sunday belongs to God: every thing then on this day should be holy and religious. It should be devoted to works of piety which would attach us to God, and draw tighter the links which bind us to our heavenly Father. We see this admirably exemplified in the lives of the primitive Christians, our best models in the practice of duty.

On Sundays they arose from their beds at midnight, and went to the place consecrated to the Lord, to chant therein His psalms and canticles. After the midnight office some retired to give a little

repose to their limbs, still fatigued from the labors of the week, while others remained in the house of God and prayed or sang the divine praises, or devoted themselves to deep and holy meditation until the hour for the morning office. Then the fathers and mothers accompanied by their servants and children, came in crowds to the church. With holy eagerness to hear the word of God, they pressed round the sacred pulpit, and received with joy and delight the wise counsels imparted to them by the minister of Jesus Christ. With what fervor they prayed, with what recollection they adored, and how humbly they supplicated the Lord, while the bishop offered to God the adorable victim! All partook of the immaculate Lamb, immolated for the sins of men; all received into their hearts this heavenly food,—the body and blood of Jesus. The time which passed between the morning and the evening office, they devoted to pious reading, or they went around visiting the sick and pouring the balm of consolation into the souls of their afflicted brethren. Such, my Brethren, was the manner in which the first Christians spent the Sundays. Oh! let us have the courage to imitate them, and let us on the Lord's day, like them, relish not the things of earth but those of heaven. Did not the Spirit of God address us as well as them, when He said: "Observe the day of the Sabbath, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee."\*

Yes, we ought to sanctify the Lord's day, and spend it in the performance of works of piety and religion. Convinced of the existence of this important obligation, the Church comes to us and points out for us the path we must follow. She tells us the works we have to perform, and the practices we should adopt; on Sundays and holy days, she multiplies the means of salvation, and in a manner compels us to make use of them. She summons us to the house of God, and commands us, under pain of mortal sin, to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Blessed be the Church which imposed upon us this commandment! Never did she show herself in our regard more vigilant, more tender, more maternal. For the Mass being the holiest act of religion, is therefore the best and most proper means we have of honoring God, and drawing down upon ourselves His blessings and graces.

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\* Deuteronomy, v: 12.



What shall I say to you, my Brethren, of this august sacrifice? Let it be sufficient for us to know that the Mass is the continuation of the sacrifice of the cross. It is the same priest who offers and the same victim which is offered in it. The Mass is therefore the holiest, most divine and most grateful work that can be offered to God; the one which can most effectually disarm His divine vengeance, procure the most abundant graces for us poor sinners, and obtain the greatest relief for the souls of our suffering brethren in purgatory; while at the same time it is the fittest testimony of our gratitude to God for the blessings He has condescended to bestow on us. Yes, the Mass, being the sacrifice of the cross renewed in an unbloody manner, is of infinite value in the sight of God.

But to profit by the holy and abundant efficacy of this great sacrifice, you must assist at Mass with respect, attention and devotion, as I shall explain to you more at length when I come to speak of the precepts of the Church. To sanctify your souls on Sundays, you should be present from the beginning to the end of the sacrifice. You are dispensed from this obligation only in case of *physical impossibility*, as for instance, if you be sick; or in case of *moral impossibility*; for example, if a serious loss, or great spiritual or temporal inconvenience would thereby result to yourself or others.

On the Lord's day, you ought to labor for the sanctification of your souls by being careful to hear the word of God. God wishes you to do so, and the Church commands it. The Church obliges her ministers to explain to you the divine word, and enjoins upon you to hear it, because it is this word which converts souls and conducts them to God. This divine word is necessary for all, great and small, rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned. It is necessary for you, that you may be instructed in the doctrine of God,—and more especially for such as are ignorant of the truths of eternal salvation. And alas! how many there are even of those advanced in years, nay even among the wise ones of the day, who do not know the first rudiments of religion! They can not be saved if they voluntarily remain in this culpable ignorance; let them therefore hear the word of God,—it is necessary for them. It is also necessary for those who are instructed, to hear it continually, lest they forget it. It is, in a word, necessary for us all, for it

excites and animates us in the practice of good works, supports and strengthens us in the ways of the commandments, renders vice odious to us, and leads us to avoid sin as the greatest of evils. We should delight to hear the word of God, for Jesus Christ has said: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God;"\* and you are not of God, if you dislike sermons, if you avoid them, or listen to them only with reluctance. The true Christian loves and seeks after the word of God; he esteems it as the food of his soul; he knows that his divine Saviour has said: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."†

But you must not imagine that you have done enough to keep the day holy and sanctify your souls, when you assist at Mass and hear the sermon: no, all that does not occupy more than an hour of the day, while we are to keep the entire day holy. Obedient then to the voice of the Church, come also to Vespers, to hear the praises of God sung, and to implore anew the blessing of this God of goodness. But when Vespers are over there are yet many hours at your disposal; how ought you to employ them? Fathers and mothers, the Lord answers you: "Teach your children" the laws of God, "that they may meditate on them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest on the way, and when thou liest down, and risest up."‡ Introduce into your families the pious custom of reading some good books on Sundays, you can not spend your time more usefully: for the reading of good books will excite pious thoughts in your soul, and inspire your hearts with good resolutions, which will powerfully contribute to your salvation. Make on every Sunday a short review of the week; examine the faults which you have committed; hate and detest them; form the resolution of shunning them and of leading a more Christian life; beg the assistance of God to do so. To merit this grace, if you know of any sick persons in your neighborhood, visit and console them; or if you know of any poor old men or women needing your assistance, relieve and encourage them. "Religion, pure and unspotted with God and the Father is this," says the Apostle St. James, "To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self undefiled from this world."§ It is not in your power, like

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\* St. John, viii : 47. † St. Matt., iv : 4. ‡ Deut., xii : 19. § St. James, i : 27.

your divine Lord, to cure all their evils, but it is precious in the sight of God, and profitable to your own souls to console them, to fortify them, and excite them to that holy patience "which worketh salvation."

After that you may permit yourselves some relaxation, for all amusement is not forbidden on the Lord's day. But still be mindful of the presence of God: keep yourselves all the time within the bounds of modesty and temperance: avoid all assemblies and persons dangerous to your souls, remembering that Sunday is a day consecrated to the pure and holy joy of the children of God, and not to sinful pleasures and dangerous amusements; remembering also that this day, being sanctified according to the divine will and the rules laid down by the Church, will contribute to your salvation, and conduct you to heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XLVII.

### FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

#### DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

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"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee."—EXODUS, xx: 12.

WE have duties to fulfill to God and duties to our neighbor. The three commandments which we have already explained, regulate all our duties and obligations to God: hence they were written on the first table of the Decalogue. The precepts which the hand of God engraved upon the second table, have for their object our duties toward our neighbor. Our first and principal neighbors, my Brethren, are our fathers and mothers: it was for this reason that the Lord wished that the first precept of the second table of His law should be that which pointed out to children the duties they had to fulfill toward their parents. It is of these important obligations that I intend to speak to you to-day.



"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived." Such, my Brethren, is the Fourth Commandment of the law of the Lord. By this precept, God imposes upon you four principal duties with regard to your fathers and mothers. He requires that you should respect them, love them, obey them, and assist them in their wants. My Children, your first duty to your parents is to respect them. Hear what the Lord says: "Cursed be he that honoreth not his father and mother; and the people shall say: Amen.\* Let every one fear his father, and his mother.† He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness. The inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning, in the end shall be without a blessing."‡

Why, my Children, do you owe this profound respect to your parents? Because your fathers and mothers, although mortal beings, are in your regard the image of God himself, the image of His majesty, His authority, His power, His goodness; and are therefore to be looked upon by you as sacred objects. They are the image of the almighty power that created heaven and earth: for in reality, it is to your parents, after God, that you owe your life. They are the image of the providence and goodness of God; for it is your parents who nourished, reared, protected, supported and guided you;—they hold in your regard the place of God in every thing which concerns your destiny, your happiness, both in this life and in the life to come; for you they labor and toil, for you they spend so many anxious moments, for you they undergo so many fatigues and cares, and day and night spend themselves for your advantage. Hence it was said to Tobias: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, when God shall take my soul, thou shalt bury my body; and thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life. For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb."§

Children, you should respect and honor your father and mother, in mind and heart, that is to say, your respect must be interior. It ought also to be exterior, manifesting itself by your actions, your words, and by your humble, obedient and submissive conduct. Hear with deference, and humbly submit to the advice of your

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\* Deut., xxvii: 16. † Levit., xix: 3. ‡ Prov., xx: 20. § Tobias, iv: 2, 3, 4.  
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parents, and receive their reprimands as you would receive them from the mouth of God himself. You become very guilty in the sight of God when you make little of their remarks or reproofs, and show your contempt of them by pert, harsh, insolent and unbecoming words, by violent and hasty gestures, by sullen silence, by grumbling, and above all, by speaking ill of them, and revealing their faults and defects. "Glory not," says the sacred writer, "in the dishonor of thy father: for his shame is no glory to thee."\* Hear how the Lord himself threatens disobedient children: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it.† He that curseth his father or mother, dying let him die.‡"

My Children, respect your father and mother, no matter what may be their age, their social position or their infirmities. Never forget the advice given you by the Holy Ghost: My son, receive with reverence your father in his old age, and sadden not his heart when he becomes old. If his strength is weak, support him. Be careful that you do not despise his weakness, and boast of your own strength, for in no very long time will you too grow old and feeble. Do not scorn your father on account of the advantage you possess over him. God will reward you for having upheld the tottering steps of your mother when pressed down by years, of that mother who formerly supported the weakness of your childhood. And you, my Children, who have suddenly passed from indigence to wealth, take care that you do not blush at the poverty of your parents. You are in the possession of a fortune, but your parents are poor. Will you then despise them? Remember thy father and thy mother, when thou sittest among great men, and do not forget the persons who brought thee into the world, lest God forget thee in their sight. A little gold and silver, a little shining dust, acquired perhaps by injustice and bad faith, ought not to puff up your spirit, and make you condemn your poor but virtuous parents: your parents are always your parents, and you are always their flesh and blood. You should much rather imitate the example of Joseph. God had raised him to the greatest honors, and Pharaoh

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\* Ecclesiasticus, iii: 12.

† Proverbs, xxx: 17.

‡ Leviticus, xx: 9.

had invested him with sovereign power over all Egypt; yet Joseph received his father Jacob with the greatest marks of respect and honor. Alas! how many proud and silly children will this beautiful example one day condemn before God! In very truth, how many children there are, who treat their parents with scorn and contempt, who mock, sneer and jest at them, and dare to speak to them with disdain, with haughtiness and arrogance! How many who even injure and insult them! They who ought to be respected,—who ought to command in their houses, are now-a-days the very persons who must not presume to offer a word of counsel or reproof, for they will not be heard or regarded! They tremble in presence of those who should tremble before them! A disorder equally repugnant to reason, to justice, to nature and to religion. Ah! my children, be very cautious that you never act thus toward the authors of your being; for if you do, the curse of God will sooner or later overtake you. Obey the law of the Lord, be filled with a holy respect and veneration for your parents, love them, and God will love you.

The Lord God commands us to love one another: “love one another,” says He, “this is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.” And this obligation He extends even to the persons of our enemies; He commands us to love even those who hate and persecute us. Far more then should we love our fathers and our mothers, who are much nearer and dearer to us than the rest of mankind. After God and His holy law, it is your father and mother whom you ought to love the most; such is the dictate of religion,—such also is the voice of gratitude.

At the risk of repetition, I can not resist the pleasure of recalling to your minds those beautiful words of the Holy Ghost and of St. Ambrose: “O my son, what do you not owe to your mother, who has given you birth? She carried you in her womb, amid a thousand dangers, in weariness, weakness, sickness, and through the perilous risks of a painful pregnancy. When her time was accomplished she brought forth the fruit of her womb, only through excessive pain and at the peril of her life. When she held in her arms the object of her desires, she was free indeed from the pains of childbirth, but she was not exempt from the mother’s fears. How many cares, how many painful and disagreeable



services, how many privations, how many sacrifices of her own convenience, how many anxious watchings had she not still to endure ! How many fond caresses did she not lavish on you, how eager was she at all times to promote your happiness ! After all this, what are you, and what must be thought of you, if you do not love your mother ?”

And your industrious father,—see how he concerns himself,—exerts himself, and toils for you. Daily does he water the earth with the sweat of his brow, or expose himself to all the inclemency of the season. He goes forth from his home,—he returns to it,—he is always in action : he fears no trouble,—no suffering,—no danger : he exhausts, wears himself out : and for whom ? for you,—to procure your happiness,—to enable you to live in ease and comfort on the substance he will have amassed. If after all this, you love not your father, what opinion should be formed of you ? There never was a nation which did not regard as a monster the child that is wanting in love to its parents.

Love your father and your mother, and love them dearly. As long as your love for your parents is not contrary, nor superior, nor equal to that which you should have for God,—it can not be too tender,—too affectionate. Your whole heart and soul ought to be on fire with love toward them. Every thing in you should be characterized by this love : it should make your manners amiable, your air gracious, your words kind, your actions affectionate, your endurance of their defects patient, your good wishes ardent, and your prayers fervent : such ought always to be your conduct toward your father and your mother. At the same time, I must tell you, my dear Children, that to make it Christian,—agreeable to God and profitable to your own souls,—the love you bear your parents should be animated by a supernatural principle ;—that is, you ought to love them for God, and because God commands you to do so.

Here then are the two first duties which children have to fulfill toward their parents. They must love and they must respect them. In our next instruction, we will speak of the obedience and assistance they owe them, both in their necessities during life and when their eyes will be closed in death.

My dear Children, who among you does not desire that the Lord would open His beneficent hand and shower down upon you His

graces and blessings? You render yourselves most agreeable to the Almighty,—most deserving of His favors, if, after the example of Jesus and his saints, you honor, respect and love your good parents. This is the first commandment to the observance of which the Lord has attached a special recompense. This recompense, dear Children, is a long and happy life,—a life replete with blessings. “The child that has been the joy of his mother and the consolation of his father, will be loaded with graces and blessings.” Dear Children, merit by your conduct, that your father and mother should bless you, for a father’s blessing is the source of much temporal happiness, and the forerunner of that eternal benediction which God has in store for good children in the unfading kingdom of His glory.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XLVIII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

### DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS. (CONTINUED.)

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“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.”—Exodus, xx : 12.

IN my last instruction, I spoke to you of the two first obligations of children to their parents, namely, *respect and love*. My Children, to accomplish the law of God, you must honor your father and mother, for they are in your regard the image of God, the image of His majesty, authority and power. You ought to love them, for they are your greatest benefactors, your nearest neighbors,—whose love for you is most sincere and most enduring. I must now speak to you of two other duties which you have to fulfill toward them, and those are *obedience and assistance*.

“My father, I will do whatever you command me,” said young

Tobias to his father ; for he loved the law of God which commands the child to obey his father and his mother. Obedience is so necessary to children, that it ought in some manner to constitute the foundation of their character. The Holy Ghost tells us to avoid “men disobedient to parents.”\* Yes, says St. Peter Chrysologus, avoid them, for they are monsters in nature. Thus we find Almighty God formerly commanding the severest punishments to be inflicted upon disobedient children. “If a man have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience : They shall take him, and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them : this our son is rebellious and stubborn ; he slighteth hearing our admonitions ; he giveth himself to revelling, and to debauchery and banquetings : The people of the city shall stone him ; and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it may be afraid.”† To excite yourselves to obedience, my Children, call to mind the words of the Holy Ghost : “Hearken to thy father, that begot thee : and despise not thy mother when she is old.”‡ “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just.”§ “Children, obey your parents in all things ; for this is pleasing to the Lord.”|| “Yes,” says St. Augustine, “duty obliges you to hear them as God himself, since it is God who commands obedience.”

It will also help to excite you to obedience, to set before your eyes the examples of the saints. Isaac humbly and unresistingly submits to the will of his father, when he desired to bind him and sacrifice him to God. Joseph made a long and tedious journey to fulfill the dying request of Jacob, and transport his bones to the tomb of Abraham and Isaac. But the great example on which you should delight to meditate, is that which our Saviour furnishes you, in His own adorable person. The divine Word, by whom all things were created,—the Son of God, chose to obey, not only His heavenly Father, but His own creatures, Mary and Joseph ; for He was subject to them ! After this, what child dare disobey his parents ?

\* 2 Timothy, iii : 2. † Deuteronomy, xxi : 18, 19, 20. ‡ Proverbs, xxiii : 22.

§ Ephesians, vi : 1.

|| Colossians, iii : 20.



But in what are you obliged to obey your parents? Your obedience must be universal. You ought to be obedient in every thing which is commanded you, whether spiritual or temporal. *In temporal matters*: you must work at home or abroad,—now or at another time,—not as you wish, or as seems to you good, but according to the will and orders of your father and mother. *In spiritual matters*, you are still more strictly bound to obey their commands, since there is question here of the glory of God and the salvation of your souls. Obey them, therefore, when they tell you to avoid dangerous occasions, to shun the society of vicious and corrupt persons. Obey them, when they forbid you to join in improper plays, to frequent ball rooms, ale houses and dances. Obey them, when they bid you discharge your duties as Christians, when they tell you not to neglect your night and morning prayers, to frequent the sacraments, to be diligent in your attendance at Mass, at Vespers, at instructions, and in the practice of good works.

Be obedient; this obligation is so great, that you can not be excused from mortal sin, if, in grave and important matters, you act contrary to the order or express prohibition of your parents. "He is cursed of God that angereth his mother."\* Let your obedience be lively and prompt. As soon as the order is given, you should be ready to fulfill it. Never murmur; to murmur, to comply reluctantly or ungraciously, manifests a spirit of disobedience. Your father or your mother imposes some duty on you: it is God who commands; go willingly,—hasten to obey them. Children who compel their parents to frequently repeat their commands, sin against obedience, and are the cause of many sins, such as impatience, anger, and sometimes even cursing. Finally, your obedience should be constant: that is to say, it must extend to every place,—to every circumstance, whether the thing commanded be pleasing or displeasing to you, whether it be easy or difficult; to all time, even after your parents' death, when you exercise obedience by faithfully fulfilling their last wishes.

Dear Children, there is only one case in which you are dispensed from the obligation of obeying your father and your mother; it is, if they were blind and wicked enough to command you to act

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\* Ecclesiasticus, iii: 18.

contrary to the law of God and the voice of conscience : for example, if they ordered you to labor at unnecessary servile works on Sunday ; to attend to business prohibited on this holy day ; to commit an act of injustice, of fraud or revenge ; to eat meat on Fridays or other days on which it is forbidden. Then, Christian Children, remember that the authority of your parents is subordinate to that of God,—“that it is better to obey God than man.” You may then and you should, resist your father and mother, that you may obey God ; but you ought to do so discreetly and respectfully, testifying at the same time a sincere disposition to obey them in every thing that is not sinful. Oh ! yes, in every thing that is not sinful, obey your fathers and mothers, that the blessing of your parents may abide with you, for a parent’s blessing always brings happiness with it. To merit this precious blessing, accomplish, my Children, and with the utmost care, the last duty which God imposes upon you in respect to your fathers and mothers,—assist them in all their spiritual or corporal necessities.

Should we not esteem ourselves happy to be able to restore to our parents a part of what we have received from them ? They reared, clothed, supported and protected us in our infancy ; let us, in our turn, should they be in want, relieve their necessities ; let us provide them with food and clothing suited to their condition in life. If they be sick let us visit them frequently, let us console them in their sufferings, and procure for them medicine and proper nourishment. It is in their old age that our parents stand most in need of our help and assistance, because they are then no longer in a state to labor and gain a livelihood for themselves. It is, therefore, at that time that you should redouble your attentions to them, and make greater efforts to help them. Nevertheless, how many children are there, who, instead of relieving their parents in their wants, and procuring for them the help and assistance which affection, gratitude, nature and religion demand of them, cruelly and shamefully abandon them in their old age, when pressed down by sickness and infirmities ! The sacred names of father and mother no longer touch their hearts ; they were children as long as they were dependent on their parents for support ; now that they have means of their own, they care no more for a father and a mother, who have perhaps no other resource than what they might naturally have expected from their children.

What ingratitude! what cruelty! Let them know, for it is the Holy Ghost who declares it; "the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation: of evil fame is he that forsaketh his father, and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother."\* Happy, on the contrary, thrice happy the child whose father and mother, like the mother of young Tobias, can say: O my child, thou art the light of our eyes, the prop of our old age, and the consolation of our lives! Happy such a child, for God "will one day hear his prayer, and he will be like a man who has heaped up a treasure!"

If children owe to their fathers and mothers corporal assistance, how much more are they bound to procure for them spiritual succors, especially in their sickness! Pray then for your parents. According to circumstances warn them of their duties, if you perceive that they neglect them, but always with respect, with prudence and with charity. When they are sick, neglect no means to dispose and prepare them for a good and happy death; you would be grievously wanting in your duty, if through your fault they were to pass out of life without receiving the last sacraments. Yet how many are there who let their fathers and mothers die without sending for the priest, or who call him when it is too late! They do not wish, they say, to disturb and agitate their parents by speaking to them of death; but their pity is cruel, their tenderness is worse than murder, and its sad consequence may perhaps be an eternity of torments for their parents and for themselves. Discharge these important duties for your parents in the last days of their life,—gratitude and religion impose them upon you; and even when God shall have called them to himself, do not forget them, pray for them, and get others to pray for the repose of their souls.

The honor which we owe to our parents, comprehends respect, love, obedience, corporal and spiritual assistance. Behold what God requires of children for their salvation and for the happiness of their families. My dear Children, convinced as you are of these obligations, perform them well; nature inspires you to do so,—God commands it,—the good examples furnished by the sacred Scriptures invites you, and the Holy Ghost assures you, that "he that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children: and in the day of

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\* Ecclesiasticus, iii: 11, 18.



his prayer he shall be heard: he that honoreth his father shall enjoy a long life."\* You will be filled with graces and blessings, and when you yourselves pass out of life, you will go to enjoy the felicity of heaven,—the long life of a glorious immortality, which God reserves for His elect, and which I wish you all from the bottom of my heart, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

AMEN.

## SERMON XLIX.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

### DUTIES OF PARENTS.

"And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger: but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord."—EPHESIANS, vi: 4.

WE have instructed children in the duties which they have to fulfill toward their parents. You, fathers and mothers, have also important duties to perform with regard to your children. God and the Church command me to make them known to you, and I purpose to explain them, with all the care and zeal of which I am capable. There are few persons who are not interested in this matter, for the greater number of those who hear me are either at present bound by the holy bonds of matrimony, or they intend at some future day to enter into that responsible state. If they listen to me with proper attention, they will learn how to acquit themselves in a holy manner of the duties which God imposes upon them toward their children.

To whom does the child belong? Undoubtedly to his father and mother. Upon whom, then, if not upon them, does the obligation devolve of supporting, clothing and caring for him, and of watching over his preservation? Need we any other proof of this, than the

\* Ecclesiasticus, iii: 6, 7.

choice God has made of you, fathers and mothers, to bring those children into existence? Need we any further proof of it than the love He has implanted in your hearts for your offspring? There can be no doubt of it, that it is from your hands your children must receive their daily bread, and every necessary for their support. Earn this bread then, earn it by the sweat of your brow, and by toil and labor draw it from the earth as God commands you. You are a father; work then with courage for your children, be deterred by neither trouble nor fatigue from amassing means for them; it is your duty, and you must not dispense yourselves from discharging it.

But when the goodness of God blesses your labor and toil,—when fortune smiles on you, and riches are poured into your hands, be on your guard that avarice do not enter into your hearts: be not much attached to these riches. Do not act like those foolish parents, who, to enrich their children, even deprive themselves of the necessities of life. At the same time, you must not risk their property by engaging in wild schemes of speculation, or in expensive lawsuits,—still less should you squander it away in luxury and debauchery, like so many unnatural parents, who often spend in one day at the tavern or gambling-table more money than they can earn in a week. You should not throw away your money, neither are you allowed to lay it out uselessly. It is your duty to preserve and increase it by wise and prudent economy. Remember that the Holy Ghost has said: “If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”\* Parents, you are bound to provide for your children food, lodging and clothing, and to endeavor to acquire for them some property,—some means with which they can begin the world; this is the first duty which you have to fulfill in their regard.

But there is a second and still more essential duty, which God imposes upon you. You ought to form their young minds to the love and practice of virtue. You must take all possible care to impart to them a complete knowledge of the holy and adorable truths which the divine religion of Jesus Christ teaches. But, perhaps, you have not time to instruct them; perhaps, you do not

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\* 1 Timothy, v: 8.

possess the necessary information to impart this valuable knowledge to your children. In that case, behold your duty, fathers and mothers,—a sacred duty, which you should never fail to discharge. See that your children attend a good school; see that they go to Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, and that they attend Catechism and all the instructions which pastors are bound to give to the younger portion of their charge. If you act in this manner, your children will receive a sufficient knowledge of religion,—they will know both the truths which they must believe and the duties which they have to fulfill,—and thus you will have satisfied this obligation.

Above all, comport yourselves in such a manner, that you can say to your children what Jesus Christ said to His Apostles: “I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.”\* Set them a good example, both in your words and in your actions. You owe to your children the example of justice, of charity, sobriety, modesty, and fidelity in performing religious duties. Ah! woe to you, if you have failed in furnishing them this example! Woe to you, if you have been to them an object of scandal! Jesus Christ has said to all who scandalize their neighbor, especially children: “He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”† What then will become of fathers and mothers who scandalize their children? Let your children, then, Christian parents, see you walking in the good way of virtue, and it will not be hard for them to follow you. Your conduct will be their guide,—and such as you are, such will your children be; if you are virtuous, they will be virtuous,—if you are wicked, wicked too will your children be. It is a very true saying, that the fruit falls not far from the tree. Fathers and mothers, God requires that you should give good example to your children.

Youth often contracts bad habits. The child can easily be led into the practice of telling lies, of swearing, and of evil conversations. These are bad weeds, which you ought not allow to cast their roots in the hearts of your children. If you seek not at once to

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\* St. John, xiii: 15.

† St. Matthew, xviii: 5.



eradicate them, the evil will increase, and very soon you can neither check nor destroy them. Imitate herein the conduct of God. He is all charity, and yet this God of goodness chastises in this life those whom He loves,—He reprehends and corrects them,—He makes them expiate their sins, that they may be worthy of the heavenly kingdom to which He invites them. “For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth: and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”\* These chastisements afflict us; but borne with resignation, they produce in us fruits of peace, of salvation, and merit for us the crown of justice. Fathers and mothers, if you love your children as our heavenly Father loves us, reprove and correct them for their faults. The Holy Ghost tells you: “He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him correcteth him betimes.”† No doubt, however much you temper the chastisement and reproof by your kindness, still they will appear hard and bitter to your children; but they will produce in time salutary fruits, and you shall have the joy of seeing your children increase in grace and wisdom, according as they advance in age.

In fine, fathers and mothers, the future of your children is in your power,—it is your duty to bring them up so that they can earn their livelihood, and establish themselves suitably in the world. But you must think of this in good time. You should therefore be careful to see that while young they learn to read and write, and that they acquire all the knowledge which can be of use to them in after life. On their leaving school, let your sons become good mechanics, or industrious workmen: see to what it is God calls them, and make them follow their vocation, and fit themselves for whatever art, trade or profession divine Providence may destine them. Let the mother instruct her daughter, and teach her the duties of housekeeping, how to husband well her time, and follow in the management of family affairs, the rules of a wise economy and a prudent care. Even before our divine Lord came on earth, it was said, and with good reason, that the father who neglected to give his son a trade or a profession by which he could earn his livelihood, was no better than one who would teach his son to steal. What awful responsibilities then rest upon negligent parents!

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\* Hebrews, xii : 6.

† Proverbs, xiii : 24.

Fathers and mothers, behold your duties. Do you discharge them? Look at that guilty father; he knows, without any doubt, that his son absents himself from school, that he learns nothing, that he is idle and lazy, irreverent and indevout in the house of God, that he runs and plays on the streets, and scandalizes other children by his bad words and wicked oaths; he knows that his son and his daughter squander his money in useless dress, that they absent themselves from his house at night, visit bad company, and return at late hours; he knows all this, and yet remains silent; or, perhaps, will even excuse their conduct, by that expression always criminal in the mouth of a father: "We must allow something to youth." That criminally imprudent mother is not ignorant that her vain, giddy and foolish daughter rashly exposes herself, and permits those dangerous and sinful familiarities which are the sure forerunners of shame and disgrace; yet she does not prevent her, but will even seek to justify herself by saying: "We must not be too hard on young people." Unfortunate mother! the time will surely come, when you will have reason to regret your excessive indulgence.

Others give the most pernicious example to their children. They curse and blaspheme in their presence; they make use of obscene words, utter imprecations, lies and calumnies against their neighbor; they give way to drunkenness, steal, and commit the most horrid crimes under the very eyes of their own children.

Parents, avoid these crimes, and do all that lies in your power to promote the happiness of your children. If you neglect their education, if you abandon them to their passions, they will one day bring you to shame and misfortune. Form their hearts then to virtue, as the Holy Ghost bids you,\* and your pains will not go unrewarded, even in this life, for they will be your consolation and support here below,—they will be your happiness and delight on earth, and in the world to come they will be your glory and your crown.—AMEN.

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\* Proverbs, xxix: 17.

## SERMON L.

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

## DUTIES OF SERVANTS TO THEIR MASTERS.

“Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh.”—COLOSSIANS, iii: 22.

SERVANTS, it is God who caused you to be born in that condition, in which to earn your living you must serve others; and it is through this humble, obscure way, that He wishes to conduct you to His glory. It is then not merely men but God whom you serve, and to serve God, is to reign. Yes, you will reign in heaven, if, on earth, you perform in a holy manner what God commands you. You desire to know the duties and obligations which your state imposes upon you, for I have no doubt you are anxious to secure your salvation. All your duties to the masters whom Providence has placed over you, may be reduced to these two: *obedience* and *fidelity*. I intend to explain them for you as fully and as simply as I can.

Servants and subjects, learn from the Holy Ghost to obey the masters whom God has given you: “Servants, obey your carnal masters, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as Christ. Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good every one shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”\* “Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor, lest the name and doctrine of the Lord be blasphemed. But they who have believing masters, let them not despise them,

\* Ephesians, vi: 5, 6, 7, 8.



because they are brethren ; but serve them the rather, because they are faithful and beloved, who are partakers of the benefit."\* Do promptly and with docility, without getting into a bad humor, without murmur or complaint, whatsoever your masters may command, for they occupy in your regard the place of God, from whom all authority proceeds. In the obedience which you pay to your superior, let your intention always be to do the will of your supreme Master, and you will discharge all your duties with the same exactness, whether the eyes of your master be on you or not ; you will serve him with the same zeal in the simplicity of your heart, whether he be good and kind, or of a hard, cross and dissatisfied temper, since your only desire is to please God. If you wish to be Christian servants, and to render yourselves agreeable to God, do not serve solely through the necessity of your condition, but from love of your duty, and be not like those servants who, instead of being obedient and humble, are rebellious, insolent and arrogant.

Servants, obey your masters in the Lord, that is to say, in every thing that is not contrary to His holy law,—in things that are just and lawful ; but let your obedience go no further. Like the Christian soldiers who fought under the banners of the pagan emperors, you should distinguish between the commands given you by your masters, which are conformable with the laws of God, and those which are contrary to them. They made no difficulty to draw the sword against the enemies of their country, but when any thing was exacted of them which religion condemns, they boldly refused to obey, and chose rather to die than displease God, the great Master and sovereign Lord of all.

Christian masters, you should not take offence at what I here advance. I do not wish to excite your domestics and servants to disobedience, but if you command them to do what is contrary to the law of God, I say that your rights to their obedience cease. Yes, servants, if you are told to do any thing unlawful, for example, to labor on Sundays, to perform unnecessary servile works on festivals of obligation, to violate the laws of abstinence, you ought then, without being wanting in the respect which you owe your masters, nevertheless refuse to obey them, and to violate the law of

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\* Timothy, vi : 1, 2.

God, for we must obey God rather than man. If a wicked master solicit you to sin, refuse, pray and resist with courage; flee away, quit the house, speed from the claws of the vulture that seeks to devour you, fly like the chaste Joseph, even though you were to leave your cloak, that is, some of your little wealth in the criminal hands of him who would render you guilty in the sight of the Lord. Suffer every loss rather than the loss of your soul; and cast yourself into the arms of your God, He will take care of you, He will never forsake you while you remain His faithful servant.

To obey your masters in every thing that is just and reasonable, is your first duty; to be constantly faithful to them, is your second. You ought, therefore, to be sincerely devoted to their interests, so that you never injure them, and that you never permit others to injure either them or their children, in their property or reputation, as far as it is in your power to prevent them from doing so. Such is the faithful and vigilant servant whom the Evangelist commends. Such is the fidelity which the law of God and natural justice demand of you.

Servants, be faithful to your masters. Beware then of appropriating to your own use or that of another, of selling or giving away the furniture, the food, the utensils, or any thing else belonging to your master. Remember that you are only the guardians of the things which have been intrusted to your care. But, you will say, may I not take little articles and give them to the poor? Be as liberal as you please, of your own goods, but you are not allowed to be charitable at the expense of others, unless, indeed, you have obtained their express permission. But I only take things of little value,—mere trifles, and my masters are so rich! By taking those little things, you nevertheless commit a real theft; by repetition they form an important matter, and then you become guilty of mortal sin. Moreover, is it not true, that he who is not faithful in small things, will not be faithful in great? Is it not true, that henceforth you no longer merit that any one should place confidence in your honesty? But, you tell me, I work hard, and my wages are small. Your master does you no wrong, since he pays you the wages you agreed to take. If your wages are not high enough, it is your own fault. You have no one to blame but yourself. Ask an increase, or leave the situation; but as long as you

remain in it, be faithful, and remember that God says to you: let servants be obedient to their masters in all things pleasing, not contradicting, not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity.\*

Servants, be faithful to your masters. Endeavor, therefore, to procure for them every possible profit; employ your time well, perform your work well, labor according to your strength. You should permit nothing to be lost through your negligence or carelessness; you must watch over every thing that has been committed to your charge, as if it were your own.

Discretion constitutes an essential part of the fidelity which you owe to your master. You should never talk of what passes in the family, which could in the least compromise their honor or their reputation, their credit or their peace. If there are defects among them, if division reign between the husband and wife, if the children stray from their duty, be discreet, and never reveal to others what you see. If their family affairs are in disorder, do not divulge the fact, for you might thus cause their ruin. Alas! it often happens that servants are only wicked tale-bearers, vile informers, the more dangerous as they are the less suspected; who examine whatever is said, done, or takes place in the house, only for the purpose of carrying the news to others, along with their own malicious comments. Ah! a day will come when God will severely punish you for having blackened the reputation of your masters, of whom you should never speak but in respectful terms, and whose faults and defects you should carefully conceal.

Servants, you ought to be faithful to your masters in all things. Take great care then of the children whom they confide to your keeping. It is the most precious trust they can commit to your care. Watch over the life,—watch over the conduct of these dear children, for you must answer to God for whatever evil may happen to them through your fault. You will have to answer before God and before the world, for the faults you overlook in them, for the vices you do not seek to oppose in them, and which you conceal from their parents. But, perhaps, you have even flattered the passions, and encouraged the disorders of these children; perhaps, you are yourselves the corrupters of their innocence. If so, woe to you

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\* Titus, ii: 9, 10.



because of your scandals,—it were better for you that a millstone were tied round your neck, and that you were cast into the depth of the sea. Well may you dread that the Almighty will discharge against you the thunderbolts of His vengeance, and that He will one day command the ministers of His divine wrath to bind you hand and foot, and cast you into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.\*

You, I am sure, do not wish to be among the number of these vile beings who act as the corrupters of youth. You desire to be reckoned among the good and faithful servants, and you discharge for your masters the duties that you owe them,—you respect them,—you obey them with zeal. Following then the example of the good servant spoken of in the gospel, be always ready to do all that they require of you, without reply, and without complaint. Serve them faithfully. Always defend their interests. Appropriate to yourself nothing that is theirs, but preserve their property with as much care as if it were your own. Defend their honor and reputation. Discharge all these duties with the intention of pleasing God, who is the sovereign Master, and from whose mouth you will thus merit one day to hear these most consoling words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”—AMEN.

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\* St. Matthew, xxv : 30.

## SERMON LI.

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

## DUTIES OF MASTERS TO THEIR SERVANTS.

“Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”—COLOSSIANS, iv : 1.

It is a palpable and yet very common error among masters, to imagine that they have servants only for the purpose of being served by them ; that their servants owe them every thing, and that they owe nothing to their servants. But this is far from being the truth ; in society all duties must be reciprocal : hence, the Apostle St. Paul, having said to servants : “Obey your masters,” immediately adds, “and you masters do to your servants that which is just and equal.” Servants and domestics have many duties to fulfill toward their masters, of which I have already spoken ; but masters have also obligations toward their servants : and these will form the subject matter of our present instruction.

It is very true, for the Holy Ghost has said it by the mouth of the Apostle, “that all power comes from God ;” but although the authority which masters possess comes from God, they ought not on that account to let themselves be puffed up by it, and still less should they abuse it. These servants are your equals by nature ; they are your brothers by religion. This poor domestic was formed from the same slime from which you were formed ; you, like him, are made of dust and clay. Why then are not you the servant instead of him ? God willed it otherwise ; His providence has its views in this division of conditions upon earth. Dust and ashes then, like this poor creature, you should not be elated with pride, and treat him with harshness and contempt. He is your brother in religion ; like you, he is the child of God ; like you, he was created to the image of God ; like you, he was redeemed at the price of the blood of the Son of God ; like you, he was regenerated in the saving

waters of baptism; and like you, he is destined by his vocation to reign eternally in heaven, where the distinction between master and servant will no longer exist. There, perhaps, he will be greater than you; perhaps his present lowliness will exalt him then, while your grandeur will lower you; for God is just, and He has no respect of persons.\* The poor are as pleasing to Him as the rich. There is but one thing that prevails in the sight of God, — and that is a good and virtuous life, — the holy and faithful discharge of the duties of one's state. Masters and mistresses, do you desire to be great in the sight of the Lord? Do you desire to be pleasing to God even more than your servants and dependents? Then acquit yourselves conscientiously of all the duties which heaven has imposed upon you; perform well whatever you are bound to do for your servants, both for their present and their future life, — for their bodies and for their souls. For the present life, what do you owe to your servants? If it is the servant's duty to labor with zeal and fidelity for you, it must also be your duty to give to your servants good and suitable nourishment, and to pay them just and fair wages. Hence, the Holy Spirit has said: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn on the floor."† And if then you are bound to care for the dumb beast that works for you, with how much more reason are you obliged to maintain a man like yourself, who exhausts his strength for your advantage. Give him then this necessary maintenance, that he may recruit his strength spent in your service.

Those masters fail in this important duty, who eat and drink the best things and live in abundance, while they permit their servants to feel the pangs of hunger, dealing out to them spoiled food, and even grudging them the little bread which they eat. It was not thus that our divine Saviour acted with respect to those who labored with Him in His divine mission; these poor sinners, rude and uncultivated though they might be, were never denied a seat at His table.

Masters who overburden their servants with work calculated to destroy or weaken their health, are wanting in their duties, and become guilty of great injustice. Health and bodily strength are

\* Ephesians, vi : 9.

† Deuteronomy, xxv : 4.



the sole riches of servants ; if, therefore, you place upon their shoulders burdens which are too heavy for them to bear, you deprive them of their means of living ; by wasting their strength, you commit an injustice, and become the guilty cause of shortening their days, or making them pass their old age in disease, in suffering, and in want. You would not overwork your ox or your horse, because you fear that you would thereby lose them ; and yet so much has cupidity blinded you, and rendered you hard-hearted, that you will not exhibit the same consideration toward your fellow-being, made as he is to the image and likeness of God. How criminal you render yourself in the sight of God !

We see people manifest affection for an old horse or a faithful dog, and yet they have no hearts to sympathize with, and provide for the wants of their old and infirm servants. It is unquestionably an act of cruelty for masters to abandon their sick servants, whom they could without trouble have cured in their own houses, and to oblige them to spend the last cent of their hard earnings, or be forced to retire to the poor house, which is designed only for those who have no other resource. This is not following the advice given by the Holy Ghost, who says : “If thou have a faithful servant, let him be to thee as thy own soul ; treat him as a brother.”\*

The centurion of the Gospel understood well this obligation, which, if not justice, at least charity and gratitude impose upon masters. His servant is sick ; and the master is not content with keeping him in his own house, with treating him with all possible care and kindness, and using every means in his power to cure him ; but perceiving that his good servant is about to die, he hastens to cast himself at the feet of Jesus, and begs Him to have pity on his faithful servant, and restore him to health and strength.

Here is a beautiful example to follow, Christian masters. Learn from it not to drive from your houses your hard-working servants, when old age comes on them, or sickness seizes them in your service ; treat them kindly,—with charity and with compassion, and in recompense you will draw down on yourselves the blessing of our good God,—you will be beloved by your attendants, and they will delight to serve you with zeal, with fidelity, and with love. These

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\* Ecclesiasticus, xxxiii : 31.

are your duties to your servants, as far as regards the body and the present life. Let us see what you owe them in reference to their souls and their eternal salvation.

If you are good masters, you ought to be like fathers to your servants and all dependent on you. Who are these poor servants? They are perhaps orphans, reduced to the necessity of seeking in you other parents! If not, it is certain that the poverty of their own parents forced them to tear themselves from their natural protectors, to earn their bread among strangers. Feeling then for their condition, do you fill toward them the place of those dear parents, whom they left to enter your service. On this point, your obligations are the same as those of parents to their children. You should take particular care of the salvation of their souls, you should instruct them, give them good example, remove them from every occasion of sin; you should reprove them, correct them, and see that their conduct be always wise and pious, prudent and Christian. According to the Apostle, the master who fails in this duty is worse than an infidel. Truly, Christian masters should not be content to live themselves in the practice of virtue and piety, they should take care to have their servants also pious, virtuous and wise. They ought not to be content with serving God punctually and fervently, they should also watch over their domestics, and see that they assist piously at Mass, that they serve the Lord devoutly, and do not violate His holy law. It is not enough that the master and mistress pass the Sundays and festivals in a religious, Christian manner, that they themselves sanctify the day by hearing the sermon or reading a good book,—they ought also to be very careful that their dependents keep holy the Lord's day and festivals of obligation, that they also hear the word of God and are present at the pastoral instruction; they need it for their sanctification and salvation. Masters, these domestics belong to God more than they do to you; let them therefore have time to serve the Lord; beside, you will be in the end the gainer; for if they serve God faithfully, they will not be indolent in your service.

Masters, be careful to give all under your charge good example. Never let them hear you utter a wicked word, or see you commit a bad action. You ought also prevent by every means in your power, that your servants should say or do any thing displeasing to God.

Weigh well what I have said, and judge how guilty must be those masters who take little or no trouble to inquire into the conduct of their domestics; who care not how ignorant they may be, how little they may know of their duty to God,—who never inquire if their servants attend Mass on Sundays, if they are absent from the house at night, if they keep bad company, and receive visits from ill-disposed, wicked companions.

How culpable must be the masters, who listen to the evil conversations of their domestics without saying a word by way of reprimand or correction! How guilty and imprudent must they be, who keep in their service cursers, blasphemers, and immodest domestics, who soon will corrupt by their scandalous example the most cherished portion of the family, and bring ruin on the souls of those dear children, whom you, fathers and mothers, ought to love so much! Alas! children are but too much inclined to follow bad example! how many of them are every day lost to virtue by wicked and corrupt servants! Masters and mistresses, see that you know well your important duties; if you fail to discharge them, if you neglect them, you will receive at the throne of God the most indignant reproaches, and perhaps you will be severely punished even in this life. God will withdraw from you his graces and blessings, and He will permit that your houses, given over to disorder, should fall into decay. Every day furnishes examples in abundance of this sad truth.

On the contrary, do you wish to be blessed by God in time and in eternity? Then carefully and zealously discharge the duties which He has imposed upon you in regard to your servants; take a cordial interest in the temporal and spiritual welfare of each one among them. Give them necessary support; pay them their wages, God commands you to do so. "Thou shalt not do that which is unjust; the wages of him that hath been hired by thee, shall not abide with thee until the morning.\* Never over-burden them with labor: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee."† No, treat them as neighbors, as Christians, who, like yourselves, have their Father in heaven. Be careful of their salvation,—never permit them to

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\* Leviticus, xix : 13.

† Ecclesiasticus, iv : 35.



commit evil, but with the royal prophet, say: "I will understand and walk in the unspotted way. I walked in the innocence of my heart, in the midst of my house. I did not set before my eyes any unjust thing. My eyes were upon the faithful of the earth to sit with me."\* Let your wise counsels, and above all, your good example incline them to piety and the fear of the Lord, that all together, servants and masters, may do good while on earth; and may deserve to be once more united hereafter in heaven, there to enjoy the rich recompense of eternal glory.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LII.

### FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

## ON MURDER.

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"Thou shalt not kill."—EXODUS, xx: 13.

THOUGH in this commandment of the Decalogue, Almighty God seems to prohibit only murder, yet it is certain that His prohibition extends to many other sins. For not only does He condemn the unjust killing, striking or wounding of another, but he also forbids anger, injuries, insults, and whatever else may lead to the awful crime of murder. Moreover, my Brethren, this same precept of the Lord prohibits spiritual murder, that is, the sin of scandal, which brings death on our neighbor's soul. The explanation of a precept so important merits your close attention.

What is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment? "Thou shalt not kill." In the first place, we are forbidden to cause our own death, or unnecessarily to injure our health. To kill one's self is a crime: our life belongs to God, and we must not attempt to take it away; it is a deposit which Providence has confided to us,

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\* Psalms, c: 2, 6.

and which we must preserve as long as He thinks proper to leave it to us. To kill one's self is a crime, for it is an act of treason; we are placed as sentinels in this world, to guard the interests of Almighty God, and we must not quit our post, without the order of the Captain who commands us. To kill one's self is a crime, for it is to usurp the rights of God. We did not come into the world by our own will, we must not leave it but by the command of God, who placed us here. He gave us life, that we might serve Him according to the views of His providence; to Him alone then does it belong to say: "It is enough, your work is finished, return to Me." The crime of the man who commits suicide is enormous, and so much the more dreadful, as by it he escapes the vengeance of human laws. Unfortunate man,—you suffer, and miseries press so heavily upon you, that you imagine it would be more to your advantage to die than to live longer; but, take heed, the Lord forbids you to take away your life. And beside, will a death of despair deliver you from your evils and torments? If you die in sin, you plunge yourself into eternal evils, for you deprive yourself of time, without which you can not do penance. You suffer,—then come to Jesus Christ, and He will relieve you of your sorrows; come and learn from our divine Saviour how to comply with the holy will of God; come and draw strength and consolation from the contemplation of the truths of faith. This divine faith teaches that God never imposes upon you a burden which you can not bear, He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; it teaches you that he who cheerfully carries his cross, will see these temporal pains succeeded by an eternity of happiness, for he will one day be borne by them to heaven.

But, you say to me, may I not at least desire death in my sufferings? Is it the love of God,—is it the desire of being sooner united to Him in heaven, that moves you to call upon death? And by forming this desire are you wholly and perfectly resigned to His holy will? If so, you do not sin, and you can beg of the Lord "to permit His servant to depart in peace." But no, you desire death, and this bad desire has its source in impatience, in despair, or in some violent passion which hinders your soul from paying the submission that you owe to the sovereign Master of life and death. I have no hesitation in telling you that this desire is a

sin, that you offend God, and that the grievousness of the crime which you commit becomes still more enormous, when you allow yourselves to utter blasphemies and execrations against God and against yourself.

God forbids you to seek after death ; beside, He prohibits whatever might bring about your death or cause a notable injury to your health. Alas ! these transgressions are but too frequent ! It is no uncommon thing to see people unnecessarily exposing their lives to danger. You are of this number, my young friends, when you play at dangerous games to show off your dexterity or your strength. You are of this number who give way to anger, to lust, to gluttony, to debauchery, to drunkenness, and who by these infamous passions, shorten your lives. You also are of this number, who are so avaricious that you refuse yourselves the medical attendance and remedies which your health demands, or who deprive yourselves of the necessities of life. How many people there are, who, in their sickness have recourse to particular and dangerous remedies ! All these act contrary to the commandment of the Lord, and violate the fifth precept of the Decalogue : "Thou shalt not kill."

In the second place, the law of God forbids us to attempt the life of our neighbor. To kill our neighbor is an enormous crime,—a crime which cries to heaven for vengeance. The murderer takes away from his fellow-creature his life, which is the greatest of all temporal blessings ; he has the audacity to kill a man, for whom God created every thing ; and, consequently, he destroys, as far as it is in his power, all the works of the Creator ; he attempts, in some measure, to destroy God himself, since the man whom he murders is the image of God. Hence, the Lord holds this crime in especial horror, and required that he who would dare to shed human blood, should be exterminated from the midst of His people ! It is an awful crime, and the Evangelist St. John tells us, that murderers shall suffer eternal torments in the fires of hell. And yet, who would believe it ? This horrid crime is not only committed by cruel, savage men,—sad slaves of avarice, of lust, but even by women. Too often, having had the misfortune to yield to a shameful passion, to conceal their first crime, they commit another still more abominable and frightful. Oh ! how detestable those souls appear in the sight of God,—mothers indeed, but mothers unworthy



of that endearing name, whose barbarous hands have robbed of life, even in its origin, their own offspring, and inflicted on them a two-fold death, by preventing their entrance into this world,—and by depriving them of all hope of life everlasting in the world to come. Their innocent blood will cry out against such mothers, and demand vengeance on them from heaven. It will pursue them through life, and follow them even to the abyss of hell.

You are guilty of this same crime, ye brutal husbands, who, regardless of the state in which your wives are, force them to carry heavy burdens, to overwork themselves; who excite them to anger, and do not even fear to strike and abuse them. Your children come into the world,—they are dead,—and you are the cause of their death,—you are their murderers! You also are guilty of murder,—you who fear not to exact of your children a labor which, being above their strength, undermines and destroys their constitution; you who chastise them beyond measure, who torment them, and provoke them to dangerous and violent fits of anger. They die, and you are the cause of their untimely death. God will demand an account of their blood from you. Fathers and mothers, nurses and servants, are also guilty of homicide, who sleep with newly born infants, and smother them in their sleep. This is, alas, no imaginary case; it is but too common. And even though this accident were not to occur, those imprudent persons are criminal in the sight of God, for exposing themselves to so great a danger, and for having violated a law of the Church, which threatens those unnatural parents with the most terrible of its penalties,—that of excommunication.

In fine, my Brethren, the Fifth Commandment prohibits not only murder, but also every desire of committing it; it forbids all those thoughts,—those criminal gratifications,—those wicked desires which revenge, ambition and self-interest inspire. Be on your guard then against anger, hatred and desires of vengeance. God wishes that you should remove far from your minds, every thing which might inspire you with the desire of this awful crime of murder. The Apostle St. John assures us, that he who hates his brother is a murderer. He is already a murderer before God, for he has the inclination, and harbors in his heart the disposition to bring about his fellow-creature's death. Are we not daily witnesses of the truth

of this assertion? How often have inveterate hatreds ended in homicide and murder? Far from allowing us to hate our brethren, our divine Saviour commands us to love them even when they wish us evil. He desires that we should do good to those who hate us; that we should not cease to pray for those who persecute us; He desires us to forget the injuries we have received, and that charity for our brethren should never be extinguished in our hearts. Ah! if we had this divine charity,—this charity which is gentle, meek, gracious, beneficent; which supports all things, pardons all offences, what happiness would we not all experience? What a loving peace would reign over the whole earth! What beautiful order, harmony and union would exist between all the children of our heavenly Father! Then there would be no hatred, no envy, no anger, and no revenge; our passions would be subdued, and we would no longer hear of bad desires, evil wishes, execrations, imprecations, curses, injuries and wrongs; we would no longer witness disputes, quarrels, fights, murders and homicides; there would be but one heart and one soul among us.

My Brethren, love all men,—they are your brethren, and he that loves not his brother abides in death. Never seek to revenge your wrongs, for the Holy Ghost would condemn you as usurpers of the rights of God, to whom alone belongs all vengeance. He who will not forgive, says St. James, the Apostle, he who will not show mercy, will be judged without mercy. But on the contrary, our Saviour himself assures us, that the charity which we exercise toward our brethren, by forgiving them the wrongs they have done us, will obtain the pardon of our own sins, and merit for us, on the day of judgment, the eternal rewards which God reserves for His elect in heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON LIII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

ON SCANDAL.

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“Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandal come: nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh.”—ST. MATTHEW, xviii: 7.

It is a great sin to take from our neighbor the life of his body, but still more fearful is the crime of destroying the life of his soul. Nevertheless, such is the offence of which they are guilty, who, by their Scandals, destroy the kingdom of grace in the hearts of their brethren, who cause their neighbors to depart from the paths of virtue, who induce them to enter into the ways of sin and vice, and lead them to perdition and eternal death. It is highly important that we should conceive a horror for the sin of Scandal; it is therefore my intention to-day to tell you in what this crime consists, to show you how grievously it offends God, and with what facility the greater part of Christians render themselves guilty of it.

What is Scandal? In the language of the Church, Scandal is understood to mean whatever may be for our neighbor an occasion of sin or spiritual ruin; and it is defined to be a word, an action or an omission, bad in itself or in appearance, and affording to others the occasion of falling into sin; that is, Scandal is an action or an omission calculated to induce our neighbor to do the evil which he ought to avoid, or to prevent him from doing the good which he ought to perform. An example will render this definition more clear to your minds. A vicious man,—one whose heart is corrupt, takes delight in bad thoughts; when alone, he indulges in unchaste songs, and even commits criminal actions. No doubt, he offends God,—he is guilty of sin,—of mortal sin; yet this man injures only himself, and no body else suffers from his wickedness; he is guilty of sin, but not of Scandal. But if he communicates



his bad thoughts to others; if in their presence he gives expression to these obscene words,—sings these impious or impure songs before them, then he sins not only against himself, but he wounds, perhaps kills, the soul of his neighbor, for he scandalizes him, since, by his bad example, he induces his fellow-creature to do what God forbids. And, mark it well, this sin of Scandal is so much the more grievous, the greater the number of persons present who can be thus excited to commit the evil deed.

To commit then the sin of Scandal, is it necessary that your conversations or actions have the effect of drawing your neighbor into sin? By no means, my Brethren; there is Scandal, when, considering the position of him who commits the evil, and the disposition of those in whose presence it is committed, there is good reason to fear that these persons will be enticed into sin. They happen not to fall, the grace of God has protected them, blessed be His holy name! but you who have said or done this wicked thing, which of itself was capable of inducing others to imitate your example and to sin as you sinned, you are culpable,—you have given Scandal. He who heard or saw you, resisted the temptation; but you desired to make him fall; you did what lay in your power to produce that sad result, you are therefore as guilty as if he fell. It was thus that the unfaithful wife of Putiphar became guilty of a great sin of Scandal, when, by her shameful solicitations, she sought to make the chaste Joseph fall into crime; and yet Joseph yielded not to her base desires. Thus also the impious Antiochus gave great Scandal and committed an awful crime, when by threats and tortures, he endeavored to compel the Israelites to violate their holy laws, although he did not succeed in his unholy attempt, and the servants of God remained steadfast in the ways of the Lord and faithful to their duty.

Is Scandal a great sin? It is, without doubt, a great crime to murder the body,—but to murder the soul is unquestionably far greater. St. Augustine makes a comparison between these two sins, and he clearly proves that the murderer of the soul is much more odious, though less dreaded, than the murderer of the body; that his crime is more deserving of our tears and infinitely greater than that of the assassin, who is so severely punished by human justice. One causes us to lose a life which was destined in any

event one day to end, and deprives the soul of a body which it had soon to quit, but which will be restored to it immortal; the other wrests us from God, and destroys in us that supernatural life of grace, which it is so hard to recover when once it is lost. By taking away the life of the body, the murderer becomes like Cain, who sacrificed his brother to his envy and wrath; but by dragging us into sin by his Scandals, the murderer of our souls assimilates himself to the devil, who, by enticing our first parents to disobey God, became a murderer, having by this one act of his malice brought death upon the whole human family. In depriving his fellow-being of life, the assassin only injures man; but by inflicting death on his soul, he outrages God himself! He robs the God of goodness of the souls whom He had purchased with His own blood, and gives them over to be held in slavery by the devil; he strips our loving Lord of the fruits of His painful death, and destroys, as far as in him lies, the work of our redemption! No wonder then if Jesus Christ should pronounce the awful anathema against this sin: "Woe to the world because of Scandals. . . . Woe to that man by whom the Scandal cometh;" as if He said, misery, eternal misery to him who, by his actions, his words, his false judgments, his wicked jests, his raillery, or any other means which the devil, whose agent he is, can suggest, dares induce his neighbor to offend God and fall into the snares of Satan. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."\* How richly does the scandalous man,—who by depriving a virtuous soul of its innocence, snatches it from the arms of the divine Mercy, and hands it over to be made the victim of that awful Justice which can destroy both body and soul forever,—how richly, I say, does he merit those terrible anathemas! Let us fear Scandal, my Brethren, for it is a horrible crime.

Scandal is in the sight of God a great sin, and yet nothing is more common even among Christians than Scandal. We commit it without alarm or uneasiness of any sort. Tell me, are there not many parents here present who make no account of disputing, wrangling, and quarreling among themselves, and who oftentimes

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\* St. Matthew, xviii : 6.

commit still worse sins in the presence of their children? Is it not very common for fathers of families, in the presence of their servants and children, to curse, swear and blaspheme, to ridicule and calumniate their neighbors? Are there no Christians who urge their dependents to commit evil deeds? Do we never meet any who shamelessly and unrestrainedly give bridle to the impure tongue, and utter the most obscene words? Is the number of those people small, who indulge in criminal familiarities in the fields during harvest time, in the long winter evenings, at dances, at weddings, and at parties? You sing immodest and indecent songs, —they resound on every side,—pass from mouth to mouth, from ear to ear. Ah! how many souls are lost by the impure thoughts which these songs suggest to the mind, and by the guilty fire which they light up in the heart! How many Scandals are given, and how many poor souls are lost by these Scandals! and who now-a-days has a horror of these sins? We easily become familiarized with them, and they who commit them most, far from feeling shame and remorse, soon learn to glory in their iniquity. Yet, do not deceive yourselves, you are bound to repair the spiritual evil done to your neighbor, the injury inflicted on his soul by your Scandals. You owe it to God, whom you have robbed of glory; you owe it to Jesus Christ, from whom you have wrested souls for whose salvation He shed the last drop of His sacred blood; you owe it to your neighbor: restore to these souls the grace, the innocence, the friendship of God, the precious blessings which you have taken from them. How will you do it? I will tell you. Pray for those whom you have scandalized; give them good example, and let your conduct for the future be the very reverse of that which you now regret; impose upon yourselves a penance commensurate, if possible, to the number and enormity of the Scandals which you have had the misfortune to commit. In a word, the man who by his Scandals robs God of His glory by taking away souls from Him, is obliged to do whatever is in his power to restore this glory to the Almighty, by contributing to the salvation of as many souls as he possibly can. It is true, he will not rescue from hell the souls he has already sent there by his Scandals, but he will at least have done what God requires of him.

Now, my Brethren, you know how great is the crime of Scandal.



The man who gives Scandal murders the soul of his neighbor, for he drags it into sin and into eternal death. Take heed, therefore, and never more fall into this detestable sin. Never say any thing, —never do any thing which may induce your fellow-creature to commit crime ; but engrave upon your memory these awful words of Jesus Christ : “ Woe to that man by whom Scandal cometh ! ” Let these words be perpetually present to your minds, and God grant that you never again fall into the sin of Scandal,—that none but good words ever again come out of your mouths,—that you perform only good deeds,—that you fulfill your duties as true Christians,—and thus one day reach heaven, by walking along the path of virtue on earth.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LIV.

### SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

### ON ADULTERY.

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“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—Exodus, xx : 14.

THERE is a sin which the language of every people calls shameful and infamous ; a sin which caused the world to be submerged in a deluge ; which brought down fire from heaven upon five wicked cities, and changed the places which they occupied into a fetid lake ; and this sin is that which is forbidden by the Sixth Commandment. I do not deny, my Brethren, that I fear speaking to you about the sins which the Sixth Commandment of God forbids. Nevertheless, I hope with the divine assistance so to discharge my duty, that my tongue shall not utter a single word calculated to offend your ears or sully your hearts.

“Thou shalt not commit Adultery ;” that is, thou must not be guilty of any uncleanness of body or of mind. You must not prostitute your body to shameful, base actions ; you must not let

your mind consent to lustful desires or unchaste thoughts, but you must avoid all impurity.

Adultery, which is the violation of the fidelity which the husband and wife promised to each other at the foot of the altar, is one of the most enormous sins opposed to the beautiful virtue of purity. He who is guilty of it, violates conjugal chastity, tramples under foot the oath which he made before God and His Church, and commits an act of crying injustice, for he acts contrary to the rights which each of the married couple has over the body of the other, and by this crime, perhaps, introduces into the family a stranger to inherit a portion of the estate, which ought, in justice, to descend only to legitimate children. Adultery, therefore, is a fourfold sin: of lust, treachery, perjury and robbery. Understand well then, you married people, the heinousness and enormity of this crime,—and if ever you are tempted to commit it, call to mind the example of heroic courage and virtue which the chaste Susanna presented to the world. Two wicked old men threatened to have her condemned to death if she refused to comply with their sinful desires; but this holy daughter of Israel cast her eyes upon heaven, and preferred death rather than to save her life by sin. God vindicated her innocence, and saved her from the hands of the wicked. Never forget this beautiful example, and you will drive from your presence the vile seducer, and will not fall into sin.

But the true Christian is not satisfied with hating and avoiding the sin of Adultery, he has a horror also for every action, every word, and even every thought contrary to the holy virtue of chastity; for he knows that the law of the Decalogue and the Gospel command him to fly these criminal things; he knows that Jesus Christ condemns the man who looks on a woman with concupiscence and bad desires; he knows that in this shameful kind of sin there is no light or trivial matter, that in it all sins are mortal as soon as he gives his full consent; he knows that every sin of impurity deprives him of the grace of God and closes against him the gates of heaven.

Yes, God detests these impure things, and they are sovereignly displeasing in His sight. Why so? Call to mind the truths which faith teaches us, my Brethren, and you will easily understand the reason: “Know you not,” says St. Paul, “that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then, taking the members of

Christ, make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.”\* Has not the Creator made man to His own likeness? Has not our flesh been ennobled by the incarnation of the Son of God? Have not our bodies been sanctified by the unction of baptism and confirmation, and have we not been incorporated with our Lord in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist? Are not our bodies, in fine, the living temples of the Holy Ghost?† God condescends to dwell within us; is it not, therefore, a matter of the greatest importance that we should respectfully bear in our hearts this exalted guest, glorifying Him in our mortal bodies which He consents to honor with His divine presence? Remember that your flesh does not belong to you, but to Him who created and redeemed you. Recollect that, if you permit your bodies to follow the desires of corrupt nature, you violate the sanctity of the most august temple of God, you drive from it the Holy Spirit, and you introduce an unclean spirit to reign therein instead of God. Know also that you commit a sin which extinguishes faith, brutalizes the soul, kills the body, and degrades man to a level with unclean animals. How justly then does God detest this sin, and command us to fly from every thing which might lead us to it, but more especially from idleness and intemperance in eating and drinking, which are the ordinary sources of sins against purity!

Idleness is the mother of all vices, and particularly of the one of which I speak. When a man has nothing to do, his spirit must necessarily be borne toward some object, and it scarcely ever fails to rest upon those things which are most detrimental to innocence and modesty. In idleness, the imagination is active and represents to itself impure images, in which the will easily takes pleasure, and to which it soon gives consent. In idleness, the remembrance of past sins return with great facility to the mind, and not unfrequently with new pleasure and delight. When a man has nothing good and useful to employ himself about, he has all his time to devote to evil thoughts and evil actions. Beside, the devil, who is always on the watch to surprise us, never fails to attack us at the time when he is persuaded that we are most weak and least prepared to resist him; he therefore always desires to find us idle. When

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\* 1 Corinthians, vi: 15.

† 1 Corinthians, vi: 19.



neither the body nor the mind is occupied, all the doors of the soul are open to the suggestions of the impure spirit, and he never fails to avail himself of this occasion, always so favorable to his wicked designs. We should therefore be always doing something, says St. Augustine, that being continually occupied, we may be able to avoid the wiles and resist the attacks of the tempter. Let the devil always find you employed, says St. Jerome, for he who works is tempted only by one devil, while the idler is pursued by legions. I appeal to your own experience, my Brethren, is it not true that you owe to idleness the misfortune of having committed many of your sins. Is it not true that you are more frequently tempted on days when you have nothing to do than on those when you are hard at work? Here is a young man:—for a whole week he has no bad thought, commits no immodest action, because he labors diligently and constantly. But as soon as Sunday comes, this same young man, so prudent and wise during the week days, now goes into bad company, gives expression to obscene, filthy words, entertains impure thoughts, commits actions which God condemns, sullies his mind, his heart and his body with horrible sins. Whence does this lamentable change come? The question is easily answered; instead of keeping the Lord's day holy by devoting it to exercises of piety and religion, as God and the Church command him, he passes the whole day in idleness, with bad companions. How many are the sins which he commits; and how much, alas! is their number increased, if to idleness he has the misfortune to add intemperance in drinking,—the degrading vice of drunkenness!

My Brethren, the experience of every age teaches us, that nothing so effectually excites men to impurity as wine and intoxicating drinks. It is very difficult for those who are addicted to the use of spirituous liquors to be truly chaste. Whenever you see a drunkard, you may be certain that he is also an immodest man. The consequence is legitimate, as experience abundantly proves. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury.\* Keep always before you this maxim of the wise man: "wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous; whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise."† Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom:

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\* Ephesians, v: 18.

† Proverbs, xx: 1.

“take heed,” He says, “lest your hearts be surfeited with drunkenness and gluttony.” St. Jerome emphatically tells us, that a body full of strong drinks will wallow in criminal delights.

Avoid idleness, refrain from drunkenness, if you wish to preserve in your hearts the holy virtue of purity. “My son,” says the wise man, “if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them; walk not thou with them: restrain thy foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil.”\* If you wish to be pure, my Brethren, shun every dangerous occasion of sin; rely not upon your own strength, nor trust your own wisdom, for, as St. Augustine says, you are not stronger than David, nor wiser than Solomon. But into what shocking sins did these two kings fall, by imprudently exposing themselves to dangerous occasions. Ah! if you are not stronger nor wiser than they were, how much reason have you to fear? But, perhaps, you have been living for this long time past, in the occasion which I fear so much for you. Alas! you will lose your soul, and there is no salvation for you, unless you destroy that criminal habit, break that connection, quit that person who has caused you so often to offend God, and depart from that house wherein you have been so many times betrayed. My dear Brother, you wish, no doubt, to be once more pure and chaste, to be relieved of the heavy weight of sin under which you groan; quit then, quit the occasion of your sin, for the Holy Ghost has declared “that he who loves the danger shall perish in the danger.”

And you pure souls, you have a great love for this angelic virtue, but you have your fears, because you have so much to endure from temptations. Listen to those words of St. John of Damascus: “Watching, labor, prayer and fasting are the arms which you must employ to overcome the concupiscence of the flesh. Join to these pious practices the thought of death and the rigor of the torments reserved for those who abandon themselves to the mortal pleasures of sensuality.” And I may add to those words of the holy doctor, frequent the sacraments; often purify your soul in the waters of penance; present yourself often at the table of the Lord to feast there on the bread of the strong and the wine which makes virgins. Above all, have a true devotion to the most holy

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\* Proverbs, i: 10, 15

Virgin. Pray to the Mother of God with fervor and perseverance, and she will not cease to watch over you, to aid and support you in the hour of trial, for she protects, in a special manner, those souls who desire to serve God with pure and chaste hearts. Adopt the holy practice of reciting every morning and evening three times the "Hail Mary" in honor of her immaculate conception. You will thus become pleasing in her sight, and she will obtain for you from her divine Son many and powerful graces. If you wish then to remain pure, "watch and pray," says our divine Saviour, "that you enter not into temptation;" that is, that you may not yield to the temptation of the flesh. Keep yourselves in the presence of God, who sees all things, even the most secret thoughts of your hearts. Remember that a great recompense in the eternal habitations awaits those who shall have fought on earth the good fight of the Lord, and preserved in their hearts the beautiful virtue of purity, the virtue which will elevate men to the rank of the angels.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LV.

### SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

## ON THEFT.

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"Thou shalt not steal."—Exodus, xx : 15.

ADMIRE the infinite goodness and love of God for man. Not satisfied with protecting our life, our body, our honor and our reputation, by these two precepts : "Thou shalt not kill ;—thou shalt not commit adultery ;" He is also pleased by this commandment : "Thou shalt not steal," to forbid all injury to our external goods and whatever may belong to us. By this, God designs to hinder any one from taking away or damaging the property of another, of which He declares himself the protector. There are a great



many ways of injuring our neighbor in his property: to-day I will speak only of theft.

“Thou shalt not steal.” God prohibits theft, that is to say, the taking away by violence, by cunning, or by fraud, goods which do not belong to us. To offer violence to our neighbor to obtain possession of his property, is called robbery. Such is the crime committed by highwaymen, and those who abuse their credit, their authority or their strength, to compel the weak to give up their goods. They also are guilty of this crime, who take advantage of the fears and wants of the poor, the widow and the orphan, to plunder them. In a word, all these are guilty of robbery, who trample under foot the rights of the helpless and the weak; they are all detestable robbers of their neighbor’s property. Simple stealing consists in taking a thing secretly and without the knowledge of him to whom it belongs.

Even had God not forbidden us in the Decalogue to steal the property of another, the natural law would have taught us that stealing is a crime, for it forbids us to do to another what we would not be willing to have done to ourselves. Now, it is a contradiction in words to say, that any one willingly suffers his property to be taken away or retained against his will. But not only is theft opposed to the natural law and to justice, it is also contrary to charity, since, far from allowing us to do him wrong, charity imposes upon us the obligation of wishing well to our neighbor, and assisting him as far as we are able. What would become of society, if men could lawfully and with impunity take away one another’s goods? And of how many evils is not theft the origin? It is the source of a multitude of rash judgments, hatreds, enmities, animosities, murders and revolutions. No one, therefore, can doubt that theft is in its nature a mortal sin. The Apostle St. Paul clearly marks it as such, when he says, that neither those who commit fraud, nor thieves shall ever possess the kingdom of heaven.\* The prophet Zacharias had, long before, pronounced the condemnation of all injustice: “‘This is the curse,” said he, “that goeth forth over the face of the earth; for every thief shall be judged as is there written.”† Another prophet exclaimed:

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\* 1 Corinthians, vi: 10.

† Zacharias, v: 3.

“Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own! how long also doth he load himself with thick clay?”\* Yes, woe to him that soils his soul with “thick clay,” that is to say, with ill-gotten goods, which, like mire, burden and defile his soul! Woe to him who lays violent hands on the goods of his brother! Woe to the thief or robber, before, during and after his criminal action! There is nothing for him but fear and anguish.

See the man who has conceived the dreadful thought of stealing the goods of his neighbor, what cautious, hypocritical steps he takes! What trouble he is at to prevent the discovery of his criminal plans! With what anxiety and trembling he advances, stretches forth his arm and lays his hand on the property of his neighbor. The stirring of a leaf,—the creaking of a piece of furniture,—the distant bark of a dog is enough to make him tremble, and often puts the thief to flight. But the theft is accomplished. Then, what cares, what trouble, uneasiness and concern to hide the theft from the knowledge of all,—to be able to use, or sell the ill-gotten goods. What anguish fills his guilty soul, when he considers that it is possible he may still be discovered and delivered into the hands of justice, to be for ever dishonored, despised, and shunned by the whole world. You know well, my Brethren, and experience confirms the truth of what I say, that those who are known as thieves, are everywhere regarded with horror and detestation. Stealing is one of those vices which cover with shame and degradation, not merely such as are convicted, but even those who are suspected of them. The very name of thief is looked on with abhorrence, because we feel that he who deserves it is well nigh an assassin in heart. You pardon a man a hundred defects and weaknesses, but let any one tell you that he is a thief, and you forthwith shun him, and drive him from your house. Behold then a sin which is the inexhaustible source of disgrace and vexation. The Holy Ghost says: “confusion and repentance is upon a thief, and an evil mark of disgrace upon the double-tongued.”† Add to all this, that stolen goods never benefit the thief, as he must one day restore them, and you will admit, that stealing is not only a great crime, but also a great act of folly. I am aware that even

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\* Habacuc, ii : 6.

† Ecclesiasticus, v : 17.

for this crime there are persons who seek to excuse themselves, and who, deceiving themselves, will not acknowledge that they are as guilty as they in reality are. The thief will say : it is true, I took what did not belong to me ; but it was from a rich man ; he will not thereby suffer ; he did not even discover his loss. This is a miserable and detestable excuse, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent. Were you yourselves rich, would you be satisfied that a stranger should come and take what he pleased of your goods without your consent ? You surely would not ; do not deceive yourselves then, all men,—the rich as well as the poor,—desire that their property should not be stolen. Beside, does the law of God say to you : thou shalt not steal from the poor man ? Does it not, without any exception, tell you : not to steal, not to appropriate to yourselves the goods of any one without his knowledge and against his will ? Whether, therefore, your neighbor be rich or poor, every time you steal his goods, you do what God forbids,—and you are a thief.

Nevertheless, although it is always a sin to take the property of another, all stealing is not a mortal sin. The grievousness of this sin is in proportion to the damage which it causes to our neighbor ; so that, if the thing stolen be of such trifling consequence that our neighbor thereby scarcely suffers any damage, the sin is not one of those which will exclude you from the kingdom of heaven. But, says a learned theologian,\* whoever the person be, whether rich or poor, against whom the theft is committed, we think that the sum of one dollar is sufficient for a mortal sin. You may even sin mortally by taking a very small matter ; as when the theft, however trifling in itself, causes considerable injury to your neighbor. Thus, the man who would steal a few cents, or a little bread to the value of a few cents, from a very poor person, who had nothing else to support his life for that day, would commit a mortal sin, not indeed on account of the value of the thing in itself, which, no doubt is very trifling, but because of his cruelty to this poor person, who, he knows, must suffer a great deal in consequence. Suppose you have the intention of stealing a great sum of money, but it happens that you can take but a very small part of what you coveted ; before God, you sin mortally, for, in His eyes, the desire is taken for the

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\* Gousset.



act. He also sins mortally who steals at the same time from different persons many little things, but which taken together form matter for grievous sin. You commit a great many small thefts, yet without the intention of taking a considerable sum at any one time; but all these small thefts are morally united, either by your intention, or by being committed within a very limited period; in this case you also sin grievously by the last of the thefts, which completed the matter sufficient for a mortal sin. It is here, above all, that we see the truth of those words of the Holy Ghost: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."\*

You would deceive yourselves, my Brethren, if you supposed that the Seventh Commandment forbids only stealing or appropriating to your use your neighbor's goods. It is also a transgression of this precept, willfully to waste, or deliberately to destroy, the property of another. This is even in some respects more criminal than theft, since ill-gotten goods are serviceable to some body, the stolen thing may be turned to use, may be sold and applied to the benefit of some one; but what advantage can it be to you or any one else, when impelled by anger, hatred or revenge, you destroy your neighbor's property, his house, stock or farm? You derive no other advantage from this except the horrible satisfaction of having gratified your wicked desires, your vile and detestable passion. Unjust suspicions arise in the mind of this man, whose property you have injured; perhaps he will curse and blaspheme, and deadly enmity will spring up in his heart, which may bring about the ruin of thousands of souls. You have to answer before God for all these sad consequences of your sin; you will have much to restore and much to repair, if you wish to obtain forgiveness, and die in the grace of God.

Therefore, my Brethren, be very careful never to commit the sin of theft. Trust not to yourselves, for we become gradually accustomed to evil; conscience by degrees becomes hardened to remorse, and what appeared at first considerable, will soon seem light and even insignificant. Never forget what our divine Saviour has said: "he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater."\* Let the fear of God and

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\* Ecclesiasticus, xix : 1.

† Luke, xvi : 10.

the love of justice be the invariable rules of your conduct. If it please God to try you by reducing you to poverty, do not lose sight of those beautiful words of holy Tobias: "We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from him . . . We lead indeed a poor life; but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good."\* Ah! my Brethren, "what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Far better is it, patiently and resignedly, to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow, consoled by the thought that the just will inherit the land of the living, and will dwell there forever.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LVI.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

ON THEFT.—(CONTINUED.)

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"Thou shalt not steal."—EXODUS, xx : 15.

THE law of the Lord is violated and the seventh precept of the Decalogue transgressed in a vast variety of ways. Sins of injustice are so various, so numerous, that it is almost impossible to point them all out. However, I deem it my duty once more to speak to you on the sins opposed to the commandment which forbids us to steal. I will tell you some of the many unjust acts which are most easily and most commonly committed in the world; and I will hold them up to your view, in such a way that you may conceive a salutary dread of them, and that you may never depart from the ways of duty.

We commit a sin of injustice when we deceive our neighbor. Those persons therefore sin against justice and become guilty of

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\* Tobias, ii : 18;—iii : 23.

theft, who, in trade or commerce, demand for damaged and counterfeit articles, the same price as if the articles were good and genuine; those too, who take advantage of the ignorance or want of the seller, for the purpose of buying things a great deal under their value and below the ordinary price, they who resort to cunning and deceit to make it appear that their goods are worth a great deal more than they in reality are; those, in fine, who, monopolizing any article, raise it to an exorbitant price and thereby oppress the poor; which is a sin detestable in the sight of God. All these persons violate the Seventh Commandment. Those also are guilty of theft, who keep a criminal silence relative to the hidden defects of the things which they sell, and require for them the same price as if they were not defective. You sell an animal affected by some secret disease, and receive for it the ordinary price, yet you feel no scruple of conscience for having done so. What do I say? you glory in the deed, and boast of having outwitted those simple people whose eyes were not sufficiently sharp to discover the snare which you set for them; you glory in your triumph, but you are far from receiving glory for it before God! They also commit theft, who, in their dealings, make use of false weights and measures. Listen to those words of the Almighty: "Thou shalt not have diverse weights in thy bag, a greater and a less: neither shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less: thou shalt have a just and a true weight; and thy bushel shall be equal and true.\* Do not any unjust thing in judgment, in rule, in weight, or in measure. Let the balance be just, and the weights equal, and the bushel, for I am the Lord thy God.† Diverse weights and diverse measures, both are abominable before God.‡" Say not that these persons are excusable because they cause no great damage by their small thefts to any one in particular. We must judge them as we would judge the man who should steal a considerable sum from a community or a city; the wrong he does to each particular individual is very slight, but the injury he commits against the community,—against society at large,—is great and considerable. This man therefore is guilty of mortal sin.

Men commit a sin of injustice and transgress the Seventh Com-

\* Deuteronomy, xxv: 13.

† Leviticus, xix: 35.

‡ Proverbs, xx: 10.



mandment, when they do not discharge well their duties as protectors or guardians; when they do not administer with care and fidelity the property of the widow and the orphan; or avail themselves of the widow's and orphan's funds to enrich themselves or their families. The master who retains all or a part of the wages due to his workmen or servants, without a just reason, is likewise guilty of a breach of this precept. He is nothing less than a detestable robber of his neighbor's hard earnings. To rob the widow and the orphan, to rob the laborer of his hire, are two crimes crying to heaven for vengeance. St. James says: "Your gold and silver is rusted: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you; and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have stored up for yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers, who have reaped your fields of which you have defrauded them, crieth out; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of saboath."\* Yes, it is an awful crime to defraud the laborer of his hire: but on the other hand how many workmen also violate this Seventh Commandment? All those sin against justice, who keep for themselves, carry away, or turn to their own use the property of their employers: all who ask more material or stuff than is necessary for the work they have to perform: all who, in the discharge of their duty, culpably lack activity or care; who do not what they could and should do, but idle away their time, which in truth is no longer theirs, but his who employs them; all who are wanting in care of their master's property, who let them be robbed and plundered without at least warning them of the injury. They are also highly blameworthy, who through negligence break, damage or lose the things confided to their care.

Are we to distinguish those who contract debts in bad faith from the robber? No, my Friends; from the moment you contract debts, you have in your possession the goods of another, and if you refuse at the appointed time to restore them or the equivalent agreed upon, you unjustly retain what does not belong to you, and you are reputed as stealing it every instant. The Holy Ghost says: "Render to all their dues. Owe no man any thing."† I speak here only of those who contract debts in bad faith, or who have

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\* St. James, v: 3, 4.

† Romans, xiii: 7, 8.

no intention of paying them. An honest man may, without any fault of his, sometimes find it impossible to pay his debts. He wanted neither good faith nor prudence, but misfortune came upon him and ruined him. He has much to endure, but his inability to satisfy his creditors pains him more than all the rest,—he conceals nothing,—explains the full extent of his misfortune candidly to them,—saves up,—economizes,—spends nothing foolishly or superfluously, that he may be able one day to pay his debts,—he surely is not guilty. But we can not say as much for those who have not the will to pay what they owe, who pay only because they can not help it, and only when they are compelled to do so; nor for those who borrow money, knowing well that they will not be able to refund it. They also are culpable, who by their extravagance render themselves unable to satisfy their creditors, who perhaps will be themselves plunged into misery in consequence of the unjust and cruel refusal they receive when they demand what was lawfully due to them. Is not this a crying injustice? Is it not simply robbing one's neighbor?

It is also a sin against justice and the law of God to receive stolen goods; it is favoring and encouraging injustice, and whoever acts thus, becomes an accomplice in the theft. It is therefore right to say, that the receiver is as bad as the thief. We also offend God when we buy stolen goods. It is unlawful to keep not only things known to have been stolen, but even those which we have reason to suspect are the fruits of injustice and theft. Say not then, like some people who are blinded by cupidity: If I do not buy this stolen property, some body else will. This reasoning amounts to nothing, my Brethren, and it will never justify you in buying stolen property. Is it not the same as if you said: If I do not commit this act of injustice, another will? In the sight of God you are not free from theft, because if you did not steal, another would.

A great number of people sin against justice and the law of God by the way they act when they find goods which were lost. Listen to what St. Augustine says: "You have found on the road a purse which contains some money. This money is not yours. You are obliged to give it to the owner as soon as possible. All excuses are frivolous, and sordid avarice alone finds reason in them." Treat others as you would wish to be treated by them. Do to others as

you would have them do to you. If you lost any thing, would you give it to the person who found it? Would you not, on the contrary, make every exertion to discover the finder and get your property back from him? Observe the same rule with respect to your neighbor; try to find out the lawful owner of what you have found, and restore to him his property. But, after having made all the exertions to find him which justice and charity demand, if you can not ascertain to whom it belongs, what ought you to do with this object? If you are poor, keep it for yourself; if you are not poor, many authors of great merit and weight say, that it would be injustice for you to keep it, and contend that it must be applied to good and pious purposes; other theologians say, that it is lawful for you to use such property, and their opinion is probable.

These are, my Brethren, the sins most frequently committed against the Seventh Commandment. We will avoid them if the love of God and our neighbor dwell in our hearts,—if we desire and intend to work out our salvation; if we know how to content ourselves with what God has given us; and if we employ our strength, our health and our time in earning an honest living. If such be our dispositions, when temptation assails us we will say to ourselves: Were one to take away my goods, to deceive me, destroy my property, or appropriate to himself what I had lost, would I be satisfied with such conduct? I certainly would not. Then I will never do to another what I would not wish others should do to me. May God remove the temptation far from me, that I may be reckoned among the number of those whose hands are clean and pure.

My Brethren, let us remember that the commandment which forbids us to steal the property of our neighbor, commands us to give a part of our means to the poor,—to give alms to those who have not the necessities of life, and above all, to help such as are not able to work for their living. Far from taking, let us give, and it will be given unto us, as the Gospel tells us. Let us be sensible to the wants of the poor, let us relieve them according to our means, and assist them in their necessities. Harken to the voice of Him who promises that a glass of cold water given in His name will not go unrewarded. Charity and “alms-deeds cover a multitude of sins.” Yes, they will obtain for you repentance, pardon and heaven.—AMEN.



## SERMON LVII.

### SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

## RESTITUTION.

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“If it were taken away by stealth, he shall make the loss good to the owner.”  
 Exodus, xxii : 12.

You should bear in mind, my Brethren, that each of the commandments of God is composed of two distinct parts,—the one negative, expressing what is forbidden, the other positive, declaring what is commanded by the precept. The negative part of the Seventh Commandment forbids theft and all injustice,—the positive part commands the restitution of ill-acquired wealth, and the reparation of all wrong done to our neighbor's property.

To-day I intend speaking to you of Restitution : I will explain to you its necessity, and how it should be made. May God in His mercy grant that this instruction sink deep into your hearts ; for I regard it as one of the most important of all that we have to treat. To obtain the remission of other sins, it is sufficient to repent, confess and amend ; but with regard to sins of theft and injustice, they can not be forgiven and blotted out, unless the things which have been stolen be restored, and the wrong done to our neighbor be repaired. Restitution is a duty so strict and binding, that nothing can dispense us from it, when there is a possibility of fulfilling it : the efficacy of the sacraments and the power of the priests can not release from the obligations of justice. A man has laid unjust hands on the property of another, and this sin oppresses his conscience ; hence he fasts,—practices mortification,—prays,—goes often to cast himself at the feet of the priest in the sacred tribunal of penance,—gives abundant alms, but still he is unwilling to let go his grasp on his neighbor's goods, and will not make Restitution. His prayers, his alms and his confession avail him nothing. “Who shall ascend

into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands, who hath not sworn deceitfully to his neighbor," says the Holy Ghost.\* The prophet Ezechiel, tells us also, "that if the wicked man restore the pledge, and render what he had robbed, and walk in the commandments of life, and do no unjust thing; he shall surely live, and shall not die."† Another prophet, Habacuc, says, "woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own,"‡ for, if he dies thus loaded with the goods of others which he has unjustly acquired, his soul shall never see God. "If," says St. Augustine, "they who have not exercised works of mercy toward their brethren, shall be condemned to eternal fire, as our Saviour assures us, they also who have robbed their neighbors of their property and are unwilling to make Restitution, shall be condemned to the same fire and the same torments. Nothing defiled shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Holy Ghost calls injustice "thick clay," in order to show us how difficult it is to get rid of it, and the great struggle the unjust man must undergo before he decides on restoring his ill-gotten goods. It is difficult to make Restitution; nevertheless, my Brethren, God demands it of you; you must strip your soul of the riches of iniquity, if you wish that Jesus Christ should say to you as He once said to Zacheus: "this day is salvation come to this house:" because, my Brethren, on that day its master restored his unjust riches, he found the salvation and life of his soul, the only true riches which followed him into eternity, and which will never be taken away.

But how must Restitution be made? Who ought to be the first to make it? He who has committed the theft or done any thing prejudicial to his neighbor. If he refuse or find it impossible to do so, then all those who have taken a direct part in the guilty action are bound to make Restitution; such as they who, by their advice or solicitations, have induced the guilty party to commit the crime; they who procured the means and helped him to commit it, or who bought or furnished the necessary instruments; those who protected or harbored the thief, or who received or purchased the stolen goods. All these have been a cause that their neighbor has been deprived

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\* Psalms, xxiii: 3, 4.

† Ezechiel, xxxiii: 15.

‡ Habacuc, ii: 6.

of something belonging to him, all are therefore jointly and severally, or, as it is called, by solidarity, obliged to restore the unjustly acquired property, to repair the evil which they helped to do, and to make good the damage which their neighbor has thereby suffered. This is the advantage which a man gains by participating in an unjust act! This is the sad fruit which he gathers from his criminal conduct! How foolish then is he who forsakes the path of justice and probity! He hoped to gain a great deal by affording an asylum and assistance to the thief, by buying at a low price stolen goods, but he did not consider that by these acts he took upon himself the obligation of restoring perhaps three or four times as much as he gained by his violation of the law of God.

A thief must restore to the owner the very object which he stole from him. If it no longer exists, or if it has become useless or greatly damaged, he must restore another of equal value, or give its equivalent in money. He must, moreover, compensate for the losses and repair the wrongs which have accrued to the lawful owner in consequence of the injustice done him. He who is tempted to take away the substance of his fellow-creature, ought seriously to ponder over these things. Let him say to himself: If I steal, I must make Restitution,—I must compensate for all the losses which my criminal conduct has caused,—I must repair all the wrong done to my neighbor: there is no doubt about it, I must do all this, if I wish to save my soul and attain heaven, for God declares true that saying of St. Jerome: “If you die with your conscience loaded with another’s wealth, you will not be saved.” Ah! if men only made these salutary reflections, they would have much more courage to resist temptation, and acts of injustice would be far less frequent.

Do not imagine that you escape from the great obligation of Restitution by promising to pray for those whom you have wronged. Suppose that a thief were to take away your property, and instead of giving it back to you would promise to pray fervently for you, would you not say to him: “Away with your hypocritical prayers, and give me back what you stole from me?” Another will say: “It is true, I possess what does not belong to me,—but I give alms.” The Holy Ghost answers you: “Give alms from your own property.” What you have stolen is not yours, it belongs to him from whom you have taken it. You give alms, you say,—“do



you wish then," asks St. Augustine, "to treat God as if He were a corrupt Judge, who might be bribed by a present? If you do, you have a very false and very injurious idea of God. He detests those gifts which are the fruits of injustice, and all such alms are more capable of exciting than of appeasing His just indignation." But I do not know to whom I have to make Restitution,—I can not find out the lawful owner of the goods I unjustly possess. Have you made in good faith all the search you could for him? If you have, and still did not discover him, then give to the poor what you have unjustly acquired, and this will cover your sin. But, understand well, that it is a debt which you discharge, and not an alms which you bestow; pay therefore your debt in full. But it will ruin my family if I make this Restitution. My dear Brother, it is ten thousand times better for you and your family to live poor in this life than to be eternally miserable in the life to come. I can not restore,—I am a poor man myself. You may not be able to repair all your injustice, but can you not at least give back a part of what you have taken from your neighbor? No; I possess nothing,—I am miserably poor. If such be really the case, you are free from the obligation of Restitution. One must be satisfied to lose his rights when his debtor has nothing to give. But, my Brethren, you should at least pray for those who have suffered by your injustice, and should form a firm resolution to make Restitution whenever it will be in your power to do so. In the mean time, God will be satisfied with your good will; it suffices, provided it be efficacious, that is to say, if you exert yourselves,—if you retrench all unnecessary expenses and make every effort to amass enough wherewith to satisfy your obligation. But if, on the other hand, you make no sacrifice, if you make unnecessary expenses, lay out your earnings in pleasures, in vanity, in dress, you commit a new act of injustice, since you spend money which is not your own,—money which belongs to your neighbor: this is to insult God and those to whom you are indebted; it is to prolong and multiply your iniquities, and to render yourselves more and more unworthy of pardon.

I must now tell you the easiest and most convenient way of making Restitution. It may happen that it is not necessary for you to restore the whole at once; it is also not necessary for you to

compromise your reputation. You may then restore at different times, and in such a way that your honor will not thereby suffer. For example, you can deposit a part of the sum in a place where you are morally certain that the lawful owner will recover it; or, if you prefer it, you may ask your confessor to take charge of the goods and restore them for you to him to whom they justly belong.

The obligation of Restitution, no doubt, presents some difficulties,—causes some trouble. But you must remember that it arises from your sin, and that it is your sin alone you must blame. Accept all the trouble then as penance for your bad actions,—and suffer a little in this world that you may not have to suffer a great deal in the next. Suffer that you may merit that immortal inheritance which has not been acquired by gold or silver, but which has been purchased for you by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Ah! let not the interests of your soul prevail over your worldly interests. Wrong nobody,—repair your injustices,—labor for heaven,—there you will be rich,—there you will be happy forever.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LVIII.

### EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

## FALSE TESTIMONY.

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“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”—Exodus, xx: 16.

Our divine Lawgiver, after having, in the Fifth Commandment, watched with a tender solicitude over the preservation of our lives; after having in the seventh protected our goods and property, undertakes in the Eighth the defense of our reputation and our honor, those riches often dearer than life itself,—the loss of which is capable of poisoning all the enjoyments of earth. Were this Eighth Commandment faithfully observed, distrust, dissimulation and hypocrisy would be banished from society, and we would see

revived among us truth, intimate confidence and good faith, which would make the earth an anticipated paradise. What then does this commandment of God forbid? It forbids not only False Testimony, but also calumny and detraction, rash judgments and lies; in a word, all sins of the tongue or of thought which injures our neighbor's honor and reputation. To-day, I will speak to you of false testimony.

What is it to bear false witness against our neighbor? It is to make a false statement against our neighbor before a court of justice, after having taken the oath which is usually required of witnesses. To depose falsely is never lawful; it is always a sin, whether the testimony turn to the injury or to the advantage of our neighbor; it is a mortal sin, including the sin of perjury, the matter of which is always mortal. The man who bears false witness against his neighbor, commits a three-fold sin; he is guilty of perjury, since he testifies falsely, after swearing to tell the truth; he is guilty of injustice, since he wrongs his neighbor, toward whom he is bound to observe the laws of justice and of charity; he is guilty of lying, since he affirms or denies a thing contrary to what he knows to be true. Moreover, the man who swears falsely sins against three different persons; against God, whose holy and divine presence he despises by calling upon Him to witness a falsehood; against the judge, whom he insults in deceiving him by a lie; against the adverse party, whom he endeavors to have unjustly condemned. Hence, there is no nation, however barbarous, that has not held in horror this detestable crime, so odious in the sight of God. The Holy Spirit says: "Six things there are which the Lord hateth and the seventh his soul detesteth: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked plots, feet that are swift to run into mischief, a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.\* He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, both are abominable before God.† A man that bears false witness against his neighbor, is like a dart and a sword and a sharp arrow."‡

It is the Almighty God himself who appointed the trial by witness as the rule to be followed in the judgments of men; it was

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\* Proverbs, vi: 16—19.

† Idem, xvii: 15.

‡ Idem, xxv: 18.



God who required that every sentence should be determined and decided upon the deposition of two or three witnesses,\* as we read in the book of Deuteronomy. It is the witness then who determines the sentence deciding the property, the fortune, the honor, and even the life of his brethren. How great and awful the responsibility which rests upon him ! But what must we say of the false witness ? Not only is he obliged to satisfy the justice of God by a penance proportionate to the enormity of his crime, he is also bound to repair all the wrong which he has by his malice caused to his neighbor ; nay, even at the risk of his life, to contradict what he had falsely sworn, if the reparation can not be otherwise effected, and if there is room to hope that, by confessing the truth, the accused party will be acquitted and his innocence recognized ; for, where the danger is equal between two persons, the condition of the innocent is preferable to that of the guilty, whose crime is the cause of his difficulty. The false witness is obliged to repair the wrong which he has through malice caused, even though he is not himself benefited by his injustice. His coöperation in the unjust act by his false testimony is enough to condemn him ; that alone renders him most culpable before God, and places him under the sad necessity of repairing all the evil which has arisen from his act. If however his oath, though contrary to truth, is the result of ignorance or of involuntary error, he is not bound to reparation, since he is not in this case justly chargeable with guilt.

If therefore, my Brethren, it happens that you are called on as witnesses in any law-suit, remember that you are going to swear before God to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Tell therefore precisely what you know and just as you know it, as true what you believe to be true, as doubtful what seems to you doubtful, nothing, if you know nothing about the matter ; but whatever you tell let it be always with rectitude, frankness and sincerity. Let neither hatred, or friendship, or compassion, or fear, the inclination to please any man, or the hope of sordid lucre, presents or threats, ever induce you to swerve from your duty and violate truth. Remember that the eye of God is upon you, and that False Testimony is an abominable crime.

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\* Deuteronomy, xix : 15.

My Brethren, you admit that False Testimony is an awful sin,—an abomination before God. Can there be any crime more shocking? there can, my Brethren; the crime committed by him who brings a false accusation of a grievous nature against his neighbor's character. To accuse one's neighbor falsely, is to charge him with a criminal action of which he is innocent. The man who commits this crime, strikes a mortal blow at his neighbor's honor and reputation; he abuses most detestably the authority confided to judges, and dishonors the sanctuary of justice. And what is the source of this dark offence? Sordid interest, self love, avarice, wounded pride or some other passion equally shameful. Believe me, God detests this crime, and he who commits it will not escape His almighty vengeance.

The Sacred Scriptures furnish, in the history of Susanna, a striking instance of the hatred which Almighty God bears to False Testimony. Two wicked old men had, by a most calumnious accusation, caused this holy daughter of Juda to be condemned to death. But God in vindication of her innocence inspired the prophet Daniel, then only a youth, to deny the justice of her sentence; who being permitted to examine the two witnesses, clearly convicted them of falsehood. The sentence was reversed, and the false accusers were forced to undergo the death they had prepared for the chaste Susanna.

How then should you act when compelled by just and lawful motives to sue your neighbor? No doubt, if he has done you grievous wrong, you do not sin by seeking justice, for God permits you to do so. But take care, while giving your testimony, that you do not fail in truth. Do not exaggerate,—do not let yourself be carried away by anger, resentment or envy. Close your heart against avarice, the detestable love of gold,—which so often induces men to forge false notes and deeds, or to alter true ones, thus becoming guilty of the dreadful crime of forgery, a species of False Testimony inexpressibly odious to God.

Profit, my Brethren, by this instruction; I regard it as one of the utmost importance. Never bear false witness against your neighbor; if you do, you act against the great precept of charity, and the Holy Ghost warns us that God will not let go unpunished the man who commits this crime. Never cease to love and practice

the beautiful virtue of justice. Look on your neighbor as another self; try to be useful to him,—condole with him in his misfortunes and sorrows, and rejoice with him in his good success. Acting thus, God will be glorified in your life,—He will love you, and will one day bring you to heaven, there to recompense the virtues you will have practiced on earth.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LIX.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

### DETRACTION.

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“Nor railers, nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God.”—1 CORINTHIANS, vi : 10.

NOTHING is more common in the world than Detraction. The sin is so easily committed, and the tongue, which is the cause of it so readily set in motion, that the habit of speaking evil against another is hard to overcome. The Apostle St. James, speaking of this vice, says: “Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of the rest, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind; but the tongue no man can tame; a restless evil, full of deadly poison. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, being set on fire by hell.”\* A fire, my Brethren, which burns without consuming, which acts only on souls, and which blackens what it can not destroy. Let no word therefore ever fall from our lips without being carefully weighed and examined. Yet, how numerous are the faults committed by our unguarded tongue! We may say that Detraction is almost a universal vice. But, the more common the sin is, the greater is the necessity for combating it. This is what I propose to do in this instruction.

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\* St. James, iii : 6, 7, 8.



Detraction is the unjust defamation of our neighbor. It includes suspicions, doubts, rash judgments, slander and calumny. It is concerning the two last named sins that I wish to speak to you to-day; but before making known to you their baseness and enormity, I must tell you in what they essentially consist.

What is calumny? and what is Detraction? To calumniate is to attribute to our neighbor faults which he has not committed, or defects and vices to which he is not subject. To detract is to reveal without necessity the hidden faults, vices or defects of our neighbor; it is to divulge blameable things which our neighbor has indeed done, but which would have remained secret or been but little known. Those people deceive themselves, who imagine that they do not sin when they go about relating whatever evil they know concerning their neighbors, because what they say happens to be true. Such a person has fallen into sin,—that man has been guilty of theft,—this family do not live in peace,—the husband and wife are constantly quarreling. And because these things are true, you believe that you commit no sin when you publish them to others. Alas! what enmities, hatreds, disputes and law-suits are the deplorable consequences of these evil reports! And is it no sin to cause such evils? My Brother, you are laboring under a delusion. Do you not hear the voice of charity saying to you: Do unto others as you wish them to do to you,—never say of another what you would not be willing that they should say of you; never speak of your neighbor without necessity, or when you have something good to say about him. “If any man think himself to be religious,” says St. James, “not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”\* They therefore sin who detract their neighbor,—they sin both against charity and justice. “A good name is better than great riches,” says the wise man.† “Take care of a good name; for this shall continue with thee, more than a thousand treasures precious and great.”‡ How highly indeed does the honest man value his reputation! His good name is even dearer to him than his life; nay, he would sacrifice a thousand lives, rather than live dishonored. And yet the detractor robs him of this dearly prized treasure. Is he not then more criminal than

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\* St. James, i: 26.

† Proverbs, xxii: 1.

‡ Ecclesiasticus, xli: 15.

the thief who steals his money. When the robber is discovered, he is punished according to the measure of his guilt ; but the detractor never receives from men the punishment his odious crime deserves. Yet, wait awhile,—God will one day give him the full meed of chastisement ; He himself says to us : “The slanderer is an abomination to men, and an enemy of God. The evil whisperer and double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace. If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better than back-biteth secretly. The calumniator shall never see God.” Never will God admit into His kingdom the man loaded with the crime of a triple homicide,—and such in truth the detractor is. He has inflicted death on his own soul by the sin which he committed ; he has given a mortal blow to his victim, by taking away his reputation, which is his civil life, or by the hatred which he excites in his heart, and which causes him to lose the spiritual life of grace ; in fine, he inflicts death on those in whose presence he detracts, by the part which they ordinarily take in his Detraction. How great the wrong done to his neighbor by him who gives himself up to Detraction ! What then should a man do to obtain the pardon of God, if he has unfortunately fallen into this crime ?

He must restore what he has taken away, and repair the damage which he has caused. If he has calumniated his brother he must contradict what he has said,—he must retract the slander ; there is no middle course. If he has simply detracted, the difficulty is much greater. For, since the evil which he has imputed to his neighbor is true, he can not say that it was not so, as this would be a lie. He must therefore resort to other means ; he must speak well of the person whom he has reviled, the more especially if he has reason to believe that this method of repairing the evil is more agreeable to him, and in order not to renew the recollection of his fault. If the Detraction or calumny, beside the wrong it has done to his neighbor's reputation, has caused other damages ; for instance, if it has occasioned the loss of employment or work, this loss must also be repaired : it happens through the detractor's fault ; and it is the detractor's duty to make reparation for it.

It is therefore not without good reason that God orders us to put a bridle on our tongue as we would on a savage beast. This bridle may be broken ; then let this beast be placed within an inclosure,

and lest he should escape, let a good lock be placed upon the door. Along with all this let us set a sentinel to keep continual watch, and place upon our lips a guard of circumspection. We may imagine ourselves now to be well defended against the temptation of Detraction, nevertheless, we will fall into the evil, unless we remove far from us the causes which produce it. And what are the ordinary causes of Detraction? Interest, pride, jealousy and hatred. Can there be any causes more contemptible? How justly then has the Holy Ghost forbidden us to frequent the company of detractors.

But is it never allowed to tell the evil which we know of our neighbor? My Brethren, it is not always a sin to make known the defects and vices of another. Thus we can and we ought to make known the evil which we know of a man, for the benefit of another who deserves to be preferred to him whose fault we divulge. For example, it is not Detraction to inform a superior of the faults of his inferiors, that he may correct them and prevent the disorders to which these faults may give rise. It is not Detraction to tell the truth to a man who asks information about a servant whom he desires to engage, about laborers whom he wishes to employ, or about a person with whom he has some intention of contracting marriage. Neither is it Detraction to expose the villain, who tries by flattery to ingratiate himself with an honest man, that he may deceive and dupe him. But in any case always speak of the evil with regret, with circumspection, without exaggeration; exactly as it is, and as you know it to be, and only to those persons whose interest it is to be made acquainted with it. My Brethren, refrain from inquiring into the conduct of your neighbor, for you are not permitted to scrutinize the sentiments, the intentions, the actions of your brother, or to make efforts to find out what he wishes to keep secret. Would you be pleased at a person inquiring into your faults with a view to publish them to the world? Surely not. Preserve then a charitable silence in regard to the imperfections of your neighbor; God wishes and desires you to bury this secret in your heart. The holy king, David, hated Detraction, and he was happy in being able to say of himself, that he never sat in the company of defamers, and that he never heard them but to oppose their fury and cover them with shame. When therefore you happen to find yourself in the company of those who speak ill of their



neighbors, how should you act? You must carefully avoid taking pleasure in their slander or Detraction,—you must, neither by word or sign, approve in the least their conduct. If it is your superior whom you hear detracting, testify by your silence that his discourse displeases you. If it is an equal, endeavor to change the conversation, or beg of him to discontinue it, and defend your neighbor, as far as possible, by giving proofs of his innocence. If it is an inferior, you are bound to impose silence upon him. In a word, you must practice the great precept of charity: “Do unto others what you would wish that they should do to you.” But, is it not true that we desire that, in our absence, charitable people would kindly and courageously stand up in defense of our reputation. Let us therefore act in the same way toward our brethren.

Ah! Lord, put a bridle on our tongues and a guard of circumspection on our lips. Preserve our hearts from guile, and fill them with discretion, truth and charity. Permit not our tongues to utter those malicious words which strike alike him who speaks them, him who hears them, and him against whom they are spoken. May we rather, by the wisdom of our conversations, merit the great happiness of praising and blessing Thee for everlasting ages.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LX.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—(CONTINUED.)

### EVIL SUSPICIONS AND RASH JUDGMENTS.

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“Judge not, and you shall not be judged.”—ST. LUKE, vi: 37.

PERFECTLY to fulfill the Eighth Commandment of God, it is not enough to abstain from all calumny and detraction; we must also take care not to suspect our neighbor unjustly, not to put a bad interpretation on his actions, and not to judge him rashly. Nevertheless, it must be confessed, these sins are very common among

men ; nay, even among Christians, who ought to love one another like brothers. To form Evil Suspicions and Rash Judgments, are faults contrary alike to charity and justice. God grant, my Brethren, that I inspire you with a salutary resolution of flying these sins.

What is a rash judgment ? It is a bold, precipitate judgment, formed interiorly, to the disadvantage of our neighbor, without any lawful reason. It differs from mere suspicion, which consists in conceiving too lightly a bad opinion of one's neighbor without however being positively certain of it. An example will serve to make my meaning clearer. You find out that you have been robbed, and you make up your mind to watch for the thief till daybreak. It happens that some man stops before your house,—and you begin to think that he is the person who robbed you. As yet, this is but a simple suspicion. But, in place of rejecting it, you entertain it,—you suffer it to grow strong in your mind, all the while resting on nought but light appearances. This suspicion is bad, for you have not sufficiently solid grounds for lawfully suspecting the probity of this man. At last you believe and feel convinced that he is the thief:—you pass a rash judgment, for you have not sufficient reason, you have not a motive sufficiently strong to determine a prudent man. Rash judgment in matters of moment is a mortal sin when it is fully deliberate ; for it grievously wounds the reputation of another, and consequently, justice.

We have no right to do to another what we are unwilling to suffer from others. But who among us would be willing to have his actions judged, as he undertakes to judge those of others ? Who would be willing to have a bad interpretation put on his conduct, as he dares to ill-interpret the conduct of his neighbor ? Every man has a natural right to our esteem as long as he has not committed a bad action,—one which we can neither defend nor excuse. We are not permitted to suspect his virtue and his honesty, or to pass a disadvantageous judgment on him before we have acquired a perfect knowledge of the sentiments of his heart,—and that we know for a certainty the intention which directs him, the end which he proposes to himself to gain, and the motives which actuate him to do this action or omit this duty. You entertain a suspicion about your neighbor,—you judge and pronounce that such a man is not trust-

worthy,—is unjust,—such another is a spendthrift and libertine, and that a third is a miser and usurer ; but, remember that it is not enough for you to have seen a man committing a guilty action, or that you learn from some evil report that he has done so ; you must be certain that it was not committed without reflection, without premeditation, by surprise, that he has not repented for it, has not been converted, and that there still reigns in him the sad will of continuing to live in disorder and crime. But, you say to me, I can not know this :—that is true, for these are things which take place in the heart of man,—and it is not given to you to look into the heart of your neighbor. God alone is the searcher of hearts. Do not judge your neighbor then, since you may be deceived. You would certainly be much more apt to distrust yourself, if you took the trouble to mark down the number of times you really were deceived in the space of a single month. You have seen it, you say. Trust not to mere appearances, to some indications of guilt. We have learned it from persons worthy of credit : Be not so hasty in believing evil of your neighbor, no matter who tells you. Do you see that young woman ? Two old men, two eminently honored judges of Israel, have just denounced her, and demanded that sentence of death should be passed upon her, asserting that they caught her in the very crime with which they charge her. She bows her head in silence ;—does she not seem to acknowledge herself guilty ? Surely, here at least is one you may consider criminal. Wait,—do not pass judgment on her ; know that this woman is innocence persecuted,—is the chaste Susanna, who preferred to die, rather than violate the holy law of God. These two old men, in appearance so respectable, are two infamous wretches, who, to revenge the resistance which the chaste daughter of Israel offered to their abominable design, unjustly accuse her and seek to deliver her into the executioner's hands. Do you see that young man leaping from the room where a woman in tears cries for help, and shows in her hand the cloak which she said that she had torn from her vile seducer in his efforts to escape ? What you see and what you hear are all against him, but judge not, for after all you may be condemning the innocent. In fact, that young man is Joseph, the chaste Joseph who fled from the commission of crime ; and that weeping woman is the guilty wife of Putiphar.



You see, my Brethren, how little you ought to trust your eyes or your ears; how easily appearances deceive us, and how dangerous it is to suspect and judge your neighbor in regard by what you see and what you hear. But suppose that your neighbor is truly vicious and guilty, as his deeds seem to prove, is it permitted you then to judge him? No, for our divine Saviour has absolutely forbidden it: "Judge not, that you may not be judged."\* And the Apostle of the Gentiles adds: "Judge not before the time: until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.† Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; and he shall stand: for God is able to make him stand."‡ Therefore, do not usurp the place of God, to whom alone judgment belongs. The heart of man is a sanctuary where God alone has a right to enter; He alone can make known its hidden movements, penetrate its secret windings, and know perfectly what passes therein.

Do I by all this mean to tell you, my Brethren, that it is always forbidden to suspect and judge your neighbor? No, when there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, and when a person has an interest in knowing the truth of the fact, it is lawful to suspect, provided he suspends his judgment until every thing has been made clear and every doubt removed. For example, you ought not, without reason and without motives, suspect your children and those under your charge of vice and wickedness: but you discover that your son is absent from time to time, that he remains out all night and spends his money extravagantly; you observe that your daughter has no more the same discretion and modesty; you perceive that some of your things are missing; you have then reasonable grounds for supposing that there is some hidden disorder, something wrong, which requires looking after. You consequently watch the conduct of these persons more closely; you do not express your suspicions, but you endeavor to find out how far they are well-grounded. Such suspicions, my Brethren, are not sins; on the contrary, you would sin were you to neglect them; for it is your duty to watch over your children and servants and to preserve your household goods. But do not lightly suspect, and do not pass

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\* St. Matthew, vii : 1.    † 1 Corinthians, iv : 5.    ‡ Romans, xiv : 4.

judgment without good motives and solid reason ; let us rather dread suspicious and rash judgments, as they usually spring from evil sources. The first of these sources is the corruption of the heart, which causes a vicious man to believe that all men are as corrupt as himself. On the contrary, a virtuous man will always think well of his brethren. The second source is hatred ; hatred breeds contempt, and as soon as we condemn a person, we easily think and judge evil of him. The third is the experience which a man imagines he has : thus old people are so much the more suspicious, as they have seen more wicked men. In fine, there are minds naturally malicious, which change every thing into poison, and which make no other use of their powers than to deery the actions of others. My Brethren, let us drive from our hearts hatred, envy, pride and malignity ; let us love one another, and we will not be so ready to judge our brethren. No, says St. Chrysostom, "he who loves his brother does not condemn him, nor lightly suspect evil of him."

My Brethren, you must all die ; this sentence has been pronounced against all men : but what peace, what happiness and confidence will you experience in your heart and conscience, if, on your death-bed, you can say that you have never judged nor condemned any one ! You will then remember that, according to the express words of Jesus Christ, those will not be judged and condemned, who have not judged and condemned their brethren. Thanks be to God ! there are still among us Christians remarkable for this beautiful virtue : whose charity, ever ingenious, knows how to excuse the greatest faults, to take every thing in good part, and always to think well of their brethren. These are the men that are truly just and according to the heart of God,—who are predestined for the happy abodes of eternal glory, which I wish you all from the bottom of my heart.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXI.

## NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS.

## BAD THOUGHTS AND DESIRES.

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“Go not after thy lusts ; but turn away from thy own will.”—ECCLESIASTICUS, xviii : 30.

THE Lord is the Master of our souls as well as of our bodies ; and He requires that our thoughts and desires, as well as our actions, should be subject to His law. He is infinitely holy and perfect, and He demands of us that we should be holy in our whole being : but we can not attain to this perfection, unless we bridle our passions and repress our evil desires. Hence, the Lord our God prohibits even the thought or desire of evil. His will is written in the two last precepts of the Decalogue, which I have yet to explain, and which are thus expressed : “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife : thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods.” Let us ask the grace of God, through the intercession of Mary, that we may understand well the meaning of these two last commandments.

To sin by bad thoughts is to think willfully and with pleasure of a bad thing,—of a thing which God prohibits. To sin by bad desires is to wish, to seek, to desire deliberately and knowingly a bad thing, or what God forbids. An impure image is presented to your imagination,—a bad idea comes into your mind : if you do not reject it, if you dwell upon it with pleasure, if you entertain it, you become guilty of a bad thought. You form in your heart the desire of doing this bad thing which the thought represents ; you desire the possession of this thing which is not lawful for you to have ; you wish to commit the sin : this is a bad desire, this is a sin. You must not however confound guilty thoughts and bad desires with concupiscence,—with the inclination to evil, which is the sad fruit of the sin of our first parents, and from which the purest souls are not exempt. This unhappy inclination exists in



our hearts in spite of ourselves, and it is not possible for us to destroy it entirely; but we should never cease to struggle against it; we ought never to consent to the thoughts which it suggests, to the temptations which it raises in us, to the dangerous images with which it fills and wearies our mind and imagination; for every bad thought,—every bad desire is a sin in the sight of God, from the moment the mind willfully adopts and consents to it.

It is true, the two last precepts of the Decalogue seem to condemn only desires of impurity and avarice; because these desires are the principal sources of the sins of mankind. But these are not the only desires which God condemns. Our Lord Jesus Christ reproached the Pharisees for their thoughts of jealousy and hatred; He tells us that He repels from the altar all who cherish against their brethren a thought or desire contrary to charity. Was it not for a thought of pride that Lucifer was driven from heaven and buried forever in hell? Why also does the Holy Ghost tell us that we must avoid every desire of what is evil and prohibited? Because, to consent to bad thoughts, to form evil desires, is to expose ourselves to the certain danger of soon falling into the sins, the thought of which pleases us. If we do not commit them, it is because we have not the opportunity or the means to do so; but the crime is consummated in the heart of him who desires it; beside, God, who searcheth our reins and our hearts, and to whom nothing is hidden of all that passes in the soul and mind of man, declares that he who looks upon a woman with the eyes of concupiscence, has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And still, alas! how numerous are these sins and how easily committed! What a multitude of them are conceived in a heart drunk with a criminal passion! How many thoughts and desires at the sight of almost every object presented to view! How many sins committed in those designs, those resolutions, those promiscuous assemblies, those secret intrigues, even when they are not successful! Before God, the will is reputed for the deed, and there is sin in the mere delectation of the mind and the will, even though there be no dishonest external action. Truly, the war which we have to maintain against our flesh is exceedingly dangerous! This miserable body gives birth to a crowd of bad thoughts, corrupt desires and sins.

But the sins of thought and desire, which spring from cupidity, —from an ill-regulated love of the goods of this world, are no less numerous.

I know, my Brethren, that every desire for the goods of others is not forbidden ; for we can without sin desire to have what others possess, when we are willing to acquire it only by legitimate ways, and by means which probity and conscience can approve. But there are desires for the goods of others which are unjust, criminal, and detestable in the sight of God. St. Paul says: “They who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”\* What pernicious desires are in the heart of that man who envies his neighbor ! What criminal desires does not God behold in the souls of those merchants who wish the ruin of others for the sake of increasing their own business ; who bring about commercial difficulties, or advance the prices of provisions for the purpose of enriching themselves, and who, that they may sell at a dearer and buy at a cheaper rate, hardly suffer any others to engage in the same business which they themselves follow. What unjust desires possess those who wish the disgrace of persons in office with the hope of being thereby able to supplant them ! Oh, how many crimes originate in the heart of man ! From it, as our divine Saviour tells us, come wicked thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies and blasphemies ; it is, in a word, the source of every crime. It is to drain this polluted source that God forbids even evil desires, thoughts, imaginations, representations and recollections.

Disabuse yourselves then, you who hitherto supposed that you could, without sin, abandon yourselves to bad thoughts and bad desires. Alas ! you have but too often offended God : enter into yourselves ; do penance ; go with all humility to accuse yourselves of your sins ; repair your bad confessions, and return to the grace of God, if you wish to save your souls and attain heaven.

But there are persons who are alarmed,—are disquieted, and imagine that when a bad thought comes into their minds they commit sin : this is an error, my Brethren, which should disappear

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\* 1 Timothy, vi : 9.

from your minds, if you have understood well what has been already said on this matter. We are guilty of bad thoughts and desires only when we dwell on them with complacency and deliberately,—when we entertain and do not reject them. If we resolutely resist, if we repel with energy the bad thought, if we have not voluntarily given occasion to it, far from causing us to lose the friendship of God, this temptation will render us more meritorious in His sight, and increase our rights to His love and favor. We must not hope, in this life, to enjoy a peace free from combat. Beside, the sanctity of a soul does not consist in being exempt from temptation, but in standing firmly against whatever may try its virtue, and courageously resisting it. Be not therefore afraid of those thoughts which come into your mind in spite of yourself, but reject them as quickly as possible; and you can always repel them if you will have recourse to prayer. Say thou like the Apostles: “Save us, Lord, we perish;” and God will assist you to triumph over your enemies. Address yourself with confidence to the blessed Virgin; invoking her aid in this short and beautiful prayer: “O most pure Virgin, by thy most holy virginity and immaculate conception, obtain for me the grace of purity of body and soul.” The Queen of heaven will come to your assistance, and your soul will acquire new merit before God, each moment of the temptation. Thus it is that you should chase away lustful thoughts. You should also struggle firmly against the evil suggestions of cupidity. To overcome them, learn to be content with that state in which God has placed you, and let your desires to become better off in the world be always moderate, remaining ever submissive to that paternal Providence that disposes and conducts every thing in this world. Great wealth,—immense riches might perhaps be your ruin. Does not Jesus Christ tell us that there are very few among the rich who will be saved? “Lay not up for yourselves,” He says, “treasures on earth; where the rust, and the moth consume, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”\* Have confidence then in God; you are His most cherished creatures, and He will provide for your wants.

This instruction, my Brethren, concludes our explanation of the

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\* St. Matthew, vi: 19, 20.



Ten Commandments of God, and may the Lord grant that this exposition of His holy law may promote His honor and glory, and prove beneficial to your eternal salvation. This divine law should be engraven on your minds, and I doubt not that you will observe it with fidelity. Perform well whatever God commands, then you will live in His friendship, and you will attain that great and ineffable recompense which the Lord reserves for His faithful servants, for Jesus Christ has said: "If you will have eternal life, keep my commandments." May the grace of God always preserve you from sin; may it help and strengthen you all the days of your life, that you may glorify the Lord by advancing in the practice of good works which lead to the happiness of heaven.—AMEN.

## PART IV.

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### SERMON LXII.

#### PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH IN GENERAL.

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'And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.'—ST. MATTHEW, xviii: 17.

THE law of the Decalogue is a sacred law, commanding our respect by the dignity and sanctity of its author, by the importance of the things which are prescribed as well as of those which are prohibited therein; by the great rewards promised to such as fulfill it, and by the awful chastisements with which they are threatened who transgress its precepts. But beside the commandments of God, there are Six Precepts of the Church, which every Christian is obliged to observe under pain of mortal sin. I mean to speak to you to-day of all six in general. May the Almighty inspire me with words calculated to give you a right idea of them, and dispose your minds to understand, and your hearts to love the duties which I shall point out to you.

As Jesus Christ was not to remain always visible upon earth, He placed His authority in the hands of St. Peter and the other Apostles, whom He had appointed as chiefs in His Church, and ordained that the power wherewith they were invested should be transmitted to their legitimate successors. This authority has been perpetuated in the persons of the sovereign pontiffs and bishops, and, like the Church, it shall subsist to the end of time, according to the promises which our divine Saviour made to His Apostles: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the

world.\* As the Father hath sent me, I also send you," said He to His Apostles and their lawful successors. "Go ye, and teach all nations.† He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."‡ Are we then obliged to obey the laws enacted by the Apostles and their legitimate successors? Are we bound to submit to and practice the commandments of the Church? Yes, my Brethren, "if any one will not hear the Church," said the Son of God, "let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican;" that is to say, let him be cut off from the number of my disciples; let him be regarded as a public sinner, as an idolater, without God and without hope. How terrible this anathema which the Lord of heaven pronounces against those who are rebels to His Church! Let us dread it, my Brethren, and let us obey those who are appointed to govern us. "Obey your prelates," says the Apostle, "and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this is not expedient for you." Whoever, exclaims St. Cyprian, has not the Church as his mother, will not have God for his Father.

My Brethren, you can not doubt that to keep the commandments of the Church is a duty incumbent on every Christian, and to violate them in grave and important matters is a mortal sin. Nevertheless, what do we daily behold even among those who call themselves Christians? How many there are who imagine that they find in the most frivolous pretext lawful reasons for dispensing themselves from observing the commandments of the Church! How many Christians, who measure their obedience by their inclinations and caprices, and not by the authority of the Church? Some assist at Mass on Sundays and holidays, but pass many years without approaching the sacrament of penance; others attend Mass and go to confession at least once a year, but they do not scruple violating the precepts of fast and abstinence. Such contradictions are, alas! only too frequent.

But, you ask me, why does the Church impose upon us precepts which are not found in the Gospel? Is not the law of the Deca-

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\* St. Matt., xxviii; 20. † Idem, xxiii: 19. ‡ St. Luke, x: 16. § Hebrews, xiii: 17.



logue quite sufficient? The Church, my Brethren, does not intend by these precepts to make the yoke of the Lord heavier; she seeks in them only our good,—she has no other view but to promote our salvation,—to come to our aid, to sustain our weakness, and stay the fatal consequences of our negligence. Our holy Mother saw that her children would become remiss in the discharge of their duties would continually put off the observance of those commandments, which had no fixed time appointed for their fulfillment, and that thus many would live in the forgetfulness of God and the neglect of His precepts. To arouse them then from this fatal lethargy and preserve them from the awful chastisements which God inflicts upon all those who violate His law, she obliged them, by express commandments, to comply with the will of their divine Master. For the rest, the precepts of the Church add to the Ten Commandments nothing essential; they are but a simple development of them, determining them, to render their observance more certain and more easy. But, you say, the duties prescribed by these commandments are new; they are not to be found in the Gospel. Undeceive yourselves, my Brethren, all the precepts are in the Gospel; the Church prescribes nothing in her precepts which our Lord Jesus Christ had not first formally commanded us,—they are only a development, but a perfect development of the evangelical law.

Does not our divine Saviour recommend us to take great care of our salvation, to fly sin and every thing which leads to it? Does He not order us to repent as soon as possible, if we have had the misfortune of offending our heavenly Father? Does He permit us to delay our return to God, and to defer from day to day our conversion, while we know not the hour when we may be summoned to judgment? Has not God told us that the death of the sinner is very evil? Well then, my Brethren, when the Church prescribes that we should go at least once a year to confession, what does she do? She orders us to accomplish the law of the Lord, and assists us to satisfy an important duty. The Church commands us to receive the holy Eucharist at Easter; but is it not that we may be faithful in fulfilling what Jesus Christ himself prescribes. Do you not know that the Son of God himself said to us: “Amen, amen I say unto you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and

drink His blood, you shall not have life in you?"\* In ordering you then to approach the Lord's table, at least at Easter, the Church imposes no new obligation, she only assists you in fulfilling one already imposed by God. The Church commands us to assist at Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation; in this too she is but the interpreter of the will of her divine Spouse. When He instituted this adorable sacrifice, He recommended His blessed Apostles to renew it in commemoration of Him, without doubt that we might assist at it and partake of its benefits. And what can we offer more agreeable to God, on those holy days consecrated to His worship, than the august sacrifice in which we present to Him the body and blood of His well-beloved Son? The Evangelist tells us that the road that leads to heaven is narrow and covered with thorns; that if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. They that are according to the flesh, relish the things that are of the flesh: but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things which are of the spirit; they who belong to Christ crucify their flesh with its vices and passions, and bring it into subjection to the Spirit.† It was for the purpose of enabling us to perform this important duty of mortification that the Church has appointed us to fast during the forty days of Lent, on ember days, on the vigils of great festivals, and to abstain from eating flesh meat on Fridays and Saturdays. It is thus that the precepts which the Church has established aid us in accomplishing the commandments of God, and serve as means to make easy the observance of these holy laws.

Now when you consider that the Church is your spiritual Mother; that she has imparted life to your soul; that she watches over you incessantly, and is constantly occupied about your eternal happiness; that having by baptism brought you forth to Jesus Christ, her heavenly Spouse, she is charged with conducting you in the way that leads to heaven; that she loves you as no mother ever loved her child; I believe that you will find sufficient motives to inspire you with feelings of reverence and submission to all her maternal commands, reasons enough for fulfilling strictly all her precepts. Remember the promise of the Holy Ghost: "The child

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\* St. John, vi: 54.

† Romans, viii.

that has been the joy of its mother will be filled with favors and benedictions." Take then the good and salutary resolution of never failing in the respect, obedience and docility which you owe the Church, the most loving of Mothers, and you will merit the favors of her divine Spouse, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who will recognize you as His friends and brethren, and who will one day introduce you into His eternal kingdom.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXIII.

### FIRST PRECEPT OF THE CHURCH.

## FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH.

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"These also are the holy-days of the Lord, which you must celebrate in their seasons."—LEVITICUS, xxiii : 4.

THE Church is invested with the authority and the power necessary to establish such regulations as she judges proper for extending the glory of God and procuring the salvation of her children. We are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to obey the precepts of the Church. These commandments are founded on the Gospel; they prescribe only what God himself commands, and are but means which facilitate the fulfillment of the divine law. We will now enter upon the explanation of the commandments which the Spouse of Jesus Christ imposes upon her children; and to-day we will consider what the first precept enjoins, which is: "to hear Mass, and rest from servile works on Sundays and holidays of obligation.

What does the Church command us by this precept? She commands us to keep holy the Sundays and all festivals of obligation which she has established. She requires that we assist at the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries; that we abstain from all servile works, and that we employ those happy days in religious exercises,



in prayer and in the practice of good works, for the glory of God and the sanctification of our souls.

There are some festivals which were instituted by the Apostles themselves, and which were always observed in the Church of Jesus Christ. St. Augustine justly remarks, that we celebrate two of which even the Holy Scriptures make mention : these are the festivals of Easter and Pentecost. Formerly, there were a great number of festivals which were kept holy, but for good and substantial reasons, at the request of our bishops, the sovereign pontiffs suppressed many of these festivals of obligation, and reduced the number to four ; namely : Christmas, the Ascension of our Lord, the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, and All Saints' Day. In some dioceses, however, the Circumcision of our Lord, the Epiphany, the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin and Corpus Christi are still holidays of obligation.

Why then has the Church established these particular festivals ? It was to honor God by recalling to our minds the principal mysteries of our holy religion,—from the contemplation of which, our corporal necessities and worldly affairs but too frequently divert us ; it was to furnish us with the most solid instructions, by affording us opportunity for meditating seriously upon these sublime mysteries which have wrought the salvation of men ; it was to thank God, who is “wonderful in His saints,” and especially in His most holy Mother ; it was to induce us to imitate those saints, to procure for us their powerful intercession ; it was to awaken in the hearts of the faithful, piety, devotion and love, and to stimulate them to greater exertion in the great business of their eternal salvation.

The Lord when He established festivals among the Israelites, said to them : You shall keep these feasts every year, on such a day and in such a month ; and when your children will ask you why was this religious ceremony established, you shall explain the origin of it to them. Such, Christian parents, ought to be the lessons you should teach your children on all the solemn festivals of the Church. You should repeat to them what I am about to tell you.

The festival of Christmas, instituted in honor of the birth of the Saviour of the world, is one of those feasts that can be traced back to the remotest antiquity, and which from time immemorial has been

kept on the 25th day of December. On this day of glad tidings, the Church recalls to our minds the happy moment when God's greatest prodigy of goodness and mercy was accomplished,—the ever memorable hour on which our Saviour Jesus Christ was born of the blessed Virgin, in a poor stable, near the little town of Bethlehem. Surely, there is no day which we ought to celebrate with more devotion and holy joy, for on this day a Saviour was born to us, and the angels sang the heavenly song : “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will.” On this day the heavens rained down the Just One,—the earth opened and brought forth the Saviour. Man had sinned, and sentence of death was pronounced against him ; but behold, the Son of God comes into the world,—assumes our nature,—takes upon himself our iniquities,—all of which He will expiate upon the cross, dying upon it for us : He comes into the world to redeem the world. On this joyous day of Christmas, the priest offers up three times the adorable Victim on the altar of the Lord, in honor of the three births of God made man. We are not obliged to assist at more than one of these three Masses ; but let us, if possible, assist at all ; let us assist at the first, in honor of the temporal birth of Jesus, whose festival the Church commemorates on this day ; let us assist at the second, in honor of the birth of Jesus in the hearts of the just,—the birth of divine grace in the soul ; and let us be present at the third, in honor of His eternal birth in the bosom of His Father. This divine Saviour comes not merely to redeem the world, but also to present to the world a perfect model of virtue. Let us then on this day remember the immeasurable gratitude which we ought unceasingly to testify to our good Redeemer, and let us give Him proofs of it by loving Him, by obeying His holy voice, and by walking along the path of virtue which He has pointed out to us by word and example.

When Christmas falls on Friday, there is no obligation to abstain from meat ; but the eve of this great festival is always a day of fast and abstinence. Those Christians become guilty of mortal sin, and render themselves unworthy of the graces which Jesus comes to bestow upon them, who, on the vigil of this happy festival, violate the law of the Church, and fear not to eat flesh meat in those assemblies which, in place of being meetings for devotion and prayer, are but too often occasions of sin and scandal.

The festival of the Ascension, established by the Apostles themselves, commemorates the great day when our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, went with His Apostles to the mountain of Olives, whence He ascended into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of His Father, accompanied by all the holy souls whom He had delivered from Limbo. On this solemn day, let us elevate our minds and hearts to heaven ; let us remember that there is our true country ; let us detach our hearts from the false joys and deceitful pleasures of this world, and let us take the firm resolution to labor during our whole life to merit the place which our divine Saviour has gone to prepare for us in the abode of His Eternal Father.

The Assumption is the first and most important festival established in honor of the Mother of God. It reminds us of that day of triumph and of glory, when Mary was received into heaven as the well-beloved daughter of the Eternal Father, as the august Mother of the Incarnate Word, and as the immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost ; of that day when she was declared Queen of heaven and earth ; when God, in a manner, bestowed upon her His own power, according to the expression of the holy fathers ; of that day when she became the channel of His graces,—the mediatrix of mankind : all these prodigies are the consequences of her quality as Mother of God and the recompense of her admirable virtues. To celebrate this festival worthily, we should be careful to thank God for the great favors which He has bestowed on the most holy Virgin. It is just, right and proper that we should do so, my Brethren ; for these favors,—these graces regard ourselves, and God had us in view when He granted them to Mary. The greater her power, the greater and more abundant will be the graces which she will obtain for her children ; it ought then to be to us a great source of consolation, confidence and joy, to consider the immense glory to which the Mother of God is elevated in heaven.

The festival of All Saints, which is celebrated on the first day of November, has been instituted to honor and commemorate, by one and the same solemnity, the memory of all the saints who are in heaven. To celebrate in a proper and holy manner the feast of the glorified citizens of heaven, let us honor in them the benefits, the mercies, and the infinite perfections of God, who has crowned them in His kingdom, who has made them powerful with His own



power, glorious with His own glory, and happy with His own happiness. The honor therefore which we render them must be referred to God ; their glory being the work of God ought to revert to God. Let us invoke them as powerful intercessors before God. My Brethren, God hears the prayers which the saints address to Him to obtain His graces and assistance for us. Let us pray to them with all confidence, for they love us. But above all, let us imitate their example. The chief devotion to the saints,—the summary of their veneration and our piety, consists in imitating what we revere in them : pray therefore as they prayed ; despise, like them, the vanities of this world, and like them, think of the infinite importance of the things of eternity. Aided by their powerful intercession, we will be enabled to live and die as they lived and died, and like them, we will obtain the crown of immortality and of glory. Christians, you desire, no doubt, to celebrate properly these great festivals established by the Church and approved by God. Refrain then, during these holy days, from all sin ; for, though we should always avoid sin, we ought to fear and shun it with more care on the days consecrated by the Church to the worship of God and the veneration of His friends, the saints, because, says a holy father of the Church, he who sins on these days, makes them feasts of the devil, and not festivals of the Lord. On the vigils of those days, purify your hearts by an humble confession of your sins, that you may, on the festival, worthily receive the sacred body of Jesus, and open for yourselves an abundant source of graces and blessings. Assist piously at all the religious exercises of your parish Church,—at the High Mass, and at Vespers ; perform some special work of charity to honor God and imitate the saints. Sanctify, in this manner, all the festivals of the Church, you will work out your salvation, and, by the mercy of God, you also will arrive at the glorious abode of the saints in heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXIV.

## SECOND PRECEPT OF THE CHURCH.

EXCELLENCE AND END OF THE SACRIFICE  
OF THE MASS.

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“From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles ; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.”—MALACHIAS, i: 11.

It was the custom of the primitive Christians, even in the lifetime of the Apostles, to assemble on Sundays to assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Because, assisting at Mass being the holiest action, that by which we can contribute most to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls, it is especially by it that we must sanctify the holy days consecrated to the service of the Lord. This is the reason why the Church commands us “to hear Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation.” I doubt not, my Brethren, that you will be disposed to comply with this precept when you shall have learned the excellence of the august sacrifice of our altars.

The Mass is the sacrifice of the new law, in which Jesus Christ, by the ministry of priests, offers himself under the appearance of bread and wine, to God, to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross, and to apply to us its merits.

There is nothing more sacred, more venerable, more worthy of the majesty and grandeur of God, than the Sacrifice of the Mass, whether we consider it in its essence, or view it in the effects which it produces.

He to whom it is offered is a God ; He who is offered is himself God ; He who makes the offering is equally a God.

“In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation,” says the Lord. In truth, from one end of the

universe to the other, in every place and on every day, the adorable sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is offered to God, and is offered to God alone; for the charge that we offer this sacrifice to the saints is a false and wicked calumny of sectarians. Who was ever allowed to say, remarks St. Augustine,—I offer this sacrifice to you, Peter; to you, Paul; to you, Cyprian?

The Victim that is immolated to God alone is no other than God himself,—the Eternal Word,—the Son of the Most High, become the spotless Lamb, whose blood is so precious that it can be compared to that of no other victim, according to these words of the Psalmist: “Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I: Behold I come.”\* Yes, my Brethren, the Victim sacrificed to God is Jesus, the Son of the Most High, God of God, the Lord of lords, born of the Virgin Mary, He who died on the cross for our salvation, and to whom be all glory and all honor forever and ever. He obeys the words of the priest, descends from heaven, dwells upon our altars and becomes a holocaust for our sanctification and happiness. In fine, the Victim, who is God, has as sacrificing priest, a God; for the Apostle tells us, that Christ who is offered and who offers himself, is the Eternal Priest, “that He is the High Priest, innocent, holy, without spot, and separated from sinners.” We can then say that He is the sole priest, for the other priests are but His servants and His ministers.

There can be no sacrifice more holy and more august than the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. There is no other by which we can more worthily honor and more devoutly adore the Lord our God; for on the altar at Mass, Jesus Christ, who is coëqual in glory and dignity with His eternal Father, and before whom all grandeur is abased, comes himself to humble and annihilate himself before God. He who is adored and is worthy of being so, prostrates himself and offers adoration to His Eternal Father. God can not give more glory to himself, than that which He receives in the august sacrifice of our altars, since in it is renewed the infinite honor which Jesus, the God made man, and become like us, and our brother, rendered to His Father, when He immolated himself on the cross. “A single Mass,” says St. Alphonsus de Liguori, “gives more

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\* Psalms, xxxix: 7, 8.



honor to God, than all the prayers and all the penances of the saints, all the labors of the Apostles, all the ardor of the Seraphim and even of Mary, whose heart was so inflamed with divine love, since we present in it to God a homage consecrated by the divinity of His own Son, and since, on the holy altar, a God becomes himself the adorer of God, and offers himself up as a holocaust to Him."

Great God ! though Thou hadst bestowed upon us but one mark of Thy bounty, but one proof of Thy love, it would deserve our boundless gratitude, since this favor would be the gift of an infinite God. And behold how innumerable are the graces which Thou hast granted, how immense the blessings which Thou hast heaped upon Thy children ! But, poor and miserable sinners as we are, what can we do to prove to Thee our gratitude ? Shall we cover Thy altars with magnificent offerings ? But every thing that exists belongs to Thee. Shall we offer Thee ourselves ? Sinners as we are, this offering would be unworthy of Thee. What return then, my Brethren, shall we make to the Lord for all that He has done for us ? Ah ! we can be as grateful to God as He has been generous to us, for we can offer to Him the holy and adorable Sacrifice of the Mass ; than which there is nothing richer,—nothing greater even in heaven ; we can offer Him His own Son,—His well-beloved Son,—the object of His divine complacency ! Truly the Mass is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in it we present to God as much as we have received from His bounty and mercy.

In the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, where God finds His glory, man finds salvation. The Church of Jesus Christ, in the Council of Trent, declares that the Mass is truly a sacrifice of propitiation, of grace and of pardon. Not that the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, like the sacrament of penance, imparts to us the remission of our sins, but the august Victim reposing upon our altars as a holocaust for us, touches the heart of God, inclines Him to mercy, obtains for sinners the grace of repentance, and for the just the remission of the pains due to the sins which they had committed, and which they have not yet fully expiated. Though all men together were to sacrifice their lives, could they worthily satisfy the divine Justice for one fault committed by a creature against his Creator ? No ; Jesus Christ alone could satisfy God for our sins,

by the great sacrifice which He offered to Him on Calvary. But if, in the Sacrifice of the Cross, we have acquired a right to the merits of Jesus Christ, who died for us, in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass we receive the application of these divine merits; the cross is their source, the Sacrifice of the Mass is their channel; through it the mercies of God flow into our souls. How wretched we would be, if we had not this august sacrifice to hinder from falling on us the chastisement which our sins deserve! On our altars, as formerly on the cross, our bountiful Saviour is still the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass He still says to us: "This is my body which is delivered for you; this is my blood which is shed for you,—and for the remission of sins. Come all you that are heavy laden and I will refresh you;" come you poor, unfortunate sinners,—come and draw abundantly from the treasures of the Lord, graces to weep over your sins,—strength to enable you to rise out of iniquity,—help to persevere steadfastly in the path that conducts to heaven.

Let us say with the pious author of the *Imitation of Christ*: Alas! we are nothing, we can do nothing, we deserve nothing; but we can do all things, if Jesus Christ strengthen us; and we shall obtain every thing necessary to work out our salvation, if we apply to Him in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for He has himself said: "My Father, I know that Thou wilt hear me." Come therefore with all confidence to the altar on which our divine Saviour is immolated; let us present our desires to this God of goodness; He will present them to His Father, and they will be heard. It is difficult, says St. Chrysostom, to obtain at another time what we do not obtain during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Your prayers are then accompanied by those of Jesus Christ; will the prayer of Jesus be rejected? Oh, no! the Eternal Father refuses nothing to His well-beloved Son, and you will not have the grief of finding your supplications refused. Ask much during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and much will be given to you, for you can not ask any thing that is not infinitely beneath the price which you offer for it, since you offer Jesus, the Son of God, the equal of His Father.

How great,—how excellent is the Sacrifice of the Mass! There is no good work so pleasing to God as this holy sacrifice; nothing can so efficaciously disarm His wrath; nothing can so effectually

subdue the powers of hell; nothing can procure for man while an exile on earth such a rich abundance of graces, or so great relief for the poor suffering souls in purgatory. The Mass, says St. Chrysostom, is worth as much as the sacrifice of the cross. Have a great esteem for it then, my Brethren, and assist at it on Sundays and holidays, on every day if possible, and always with piety and devotion. This half hour spent in so holy a manner will be most profitable to you. It is during it that our good Saviour in an especial manner applies to you His merits and enriches you with His gifts. During it you will receive from the goodness of God His blessings and graces to sanctify your souls, and render them worthy to be one day admitted into the happiness of heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXV.

SECOND PRECEPT OF THE CHURCH.—(CONTINUED.)

### THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.—(CONTINUED.)

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“Do this for a commemoration of me.”—ST. LUKE, xxii : 19.

WE ought to assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to sanctify the Sundays and festivals. This august sacrifice is a most abundant source of the graces which are so necessary that we may be able to lead Christian lives in this world. In this sacrifice we render to God the purest and holiest worship of adoration; in it with Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, we address to our heavenly Father acts of thanksgiving for the blessings which He has heaped upon us, and which He ceases not to lavish on us every day. Such, my Brethren, is the summary of our last instruction. Yet, we have not exhausted this important matter; I have still to give you some advice regarding the manner in which you should hear Mass.

All Catholics who have attained the age of reason, are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to hear Mass on Sundays and holidays of



obligation. Grave and solid reasons alone will exonerate from this duty. Thus we consider, as lawfully dispensed, mothers and nurses, who can not leave their children alone without danger; the sick and those who have to take care of them; old men and women, and weak persons whom the inclement weather and the bad state of the roads prevent from coming to Church; those who must mind the house and who can not be replaced; in fine, those who are engaged in some important affair, which can not be deferred. You should not, however, imagine difficulties and dangers, when in reality none exist, for you would not be thus excused before God.

The essential parts of the holy Mass are the Consecration and the Communion of the priest. We commit a grievous sin when we come so late, or leave so soon, that we miss the Consecration and the Communion, or the Consecration alone, or the Communion under both species. It is also very probable that we commit a mortal sin when we miss the commencement of the Mass to the Gospel inclusively, and even not to come until the Epistle is finished. We ought always, as far as possible, morally speaking, to be present at the entire Sacrifice of the Mass.

Those persons therefore are guilty before God, who by sloth or evil habit, devote too much of their time to sleep and the toilet; those who start for the Church only after the last stroke of the bell, who loiter on the way, and always arrive late for Mass. You therefore, who amuse yourselves in the ale-house or other public places, and never enter the Church until long after the priest has ascended the altar, do not comply with the precept of the Church,—in the sight of God you are guilty of missing Mass.

You have come in time however, and have remained until the end; but beside having the intention of hearing Mass, have you been really attentive to what has been done during the sacred mysteries? If you have assisted with willful distractions during a notable part of the holy sacrifice, so as not to attend to what is passing at the altar, you do not satisfy the obligation which God and his Church impose upon you. Endeavor then to overcome the levity of your minds and to render involuntary your distractions. Consider that a God is going to honor you with his divine presence; that He is about to be born in the temple where you worship; that you are called on to adore Him as the shepherds did on the day

of His birth at Bethlehem; that He offers himself to His Father as on the day of His cruel death on Calvary. Oh, how deep and ardent should your devotion be! Our dispositions ought to be like those of the blessed Virgin when standing beneath the cross and assisting at the sacrifice of the true Isaac, and our modesty ought to resemble that of the angels who surround the altar when the adorable Victim is immolated. But alas! instead of coming to this holy sacrifice with a lively faith, a firm hope and an ardent charity, we assist at it with minds occupied with profane thoughts and worldly affairs. How many people, altogether given up to willful distractions, let their eyes and their hearts wander on all kinds of objects! How many who chat and laugh, and joke with those by their side! How many who come to Church for the sole purpose of exhibiting their finery and their persons to the admiration of others! How many who come not to see Christ, but the young Lazarus and the young Magdelene; not to satisfy their devotion and to give good example, but to make the house of God a place of rendezvous! Some there are who, by the indifference of their manner, seem to have no thought but that of dissipating their minds as much as possible during Mass, and no desire but that of seeing it finished as soon as possible. And can these people suppose that they fulfill the precept of the Church and render to God the homage which is due to His supreme Majesty? Know that you who act thus compel your divine Saviour to address you as He once did the Jews: "I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me."\* I immolate myself for you, and while I accomplish this great sacrifice, your indevotion and your criminal levity insult and outrage me. No, my graces and my blessings are not for you,—you are unworthy of them.

Most certainly, my Brethren, our prayers can not be more favorably presented than when Jesus Christ himself, present on our altars, receives them, to convey them to the throne of His Father; are never more capable of drawing on us the graces and blessings of heaven than when we purchase them at the inestimable price which Jesus Christ himself has offered to obtain them for us. Assist then in a becoming and holy manner at this adorable sacrifice; then your prayers will ascend to God as an agreeable incense, and will return

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\* St. John, viii : 49.

to you loaded with the favors of heaven. Let us not imitate those cold and indevout Christians; it is not from them, but from the Church of Jesus Christ that we must learn the true way of profiting by the holy sacrifice, and of assisting becomingly at it; let us then hear her teaching. Before Mass commences, become piously recollected, repel from your hearts every temporal and worldly thought, conceive a great idea of the grandeur and sublime sanctity of the august mysteries at which you are about to assist; then follow faithfully, and step by step, the priest at the altar; unite your prayers with his, make with him, at the feet of your God, an humble confession of your sins, opening your hearts to repentance, and begging of the Almighty grace and forgiveness. At the Gospel, make the sign of the cross on your forehead, on your mouth, and on your breast, and remember that the true Christian believes firmly the truths of the Gospel; professes, before the world, and in spite of the world, the divine doctrine of Jesus Christ, and conforms his life to his faith. At the Offertory, uniting your attention with that of the celebrant, offer to the Lord all that you have, and all that you are; consecrate yourselves to His service and glory. At the solemn moment of Consecration, fall on your knees, prostrate in body and in heart, humbly adore your God, concealed under the appearances of bread and wine, and, filled with a holy compunction, acknowledge that it was your sins that nailed Him to the cross. At the Communion of the priest, form a true desire of receiving also into your heart, Jesus Christ, present on the altar, and of nourishing your soul with His body and blood, which are the pledge of eternal life. Receive, with respect and devotion, the benediction of the minister of the Lord, a benediction which calls down upon you the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Mass is finished: you have assisted at the adorable sacrifice,—the same as that of the cross; retire, but let it be like the centurion mentioned in the Gospel, who everywhere published loudly the glory of the Son of God, and like the blessed Virgin and St. John, whose love for Jesus increased in proportion to the sorrows which they beheld Him suffer. Live in the love of God and of your neighbor,—in the hatred of sin; live as you would have lived on the day of the crucifixion of the Man-God, if you had been present at His adorable sacrifice on Calvary. You are also



descending the holy mountain,—you have assisted at the same immolation,—the same sacrifice; let your love then for Jesus become like theirs, more lively and more persevering.

To sanctify the days which are consecrated to Thee, and those which are established to honor Thy most holy Mother and Thy saints, Thou wilt, O Lord! that we should assist at the august Sacrifice of the Mass with respect, with modesty, with fervor and attention. On this condition, Thou hast promised us Thy graces and benedictions. Yes, my God, henceforth, and every time that we shall have the happiness of assisting at these sacred and awful mysteries, we will not cease to think of Thee,—of Thy goodness,—Thy infinite mercy,—the boundless love which Thou hast for all men; we will never cease to occupy our minds with the holy and salutary thought of Thy incarnation, Thy passion and death, which are renewed every day on our altars, and we will pray with confidence, attention and fervor. Such is the resolution which we form at Thy feet. Give us grace to be faithful to it, that having been united in Thy house on earth, for the purpose of partaking of the fruits of the holy sacrifice, we may be united again one day in heaven, to partake of Thy happiness and glory.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXVI.

THIRD AND FOURTH PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

### CONFESSION—EASTER COMMUNION.

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“Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice.”—1 CORINTHIANS, ix: 28.

To sanctify the Sundays and festivals, days specially consecrated to the Lord, to His holy Mother and the saints, we must assist at Mass with piety, attention and devotion; we must be present in body and in mind, and pray with fervor, if we wish that the bless-

ings of our bountiful Saviour should descend into our souls. This is what I explained to you in our last instruction. To-day, let us learn what is required of us by those two precepts of the Church, viz: "To confess our sins at least once a year; to receive worthily the blessed Eucharist at Easter, or within the time appointed."

Experience teaches us that the first use which man makes of his reason, is almost always to abuse it, by offending the God of goodness, who has granted it to him. This is why the Church commands all the faithful who have attained the age of discretion, once a year, at least, to confess the sins which stain their souls. She leaves to the option of each of her children the selection of the day on which he will satisfy this important obligation; but she expressly commands all to approach the holy table during the Easter time; it is proper for us, therefore, to confess our sins at the same time, that we may be in a state to make a good and worthy communion.

If you have had the misfortune to communicate unworthily, after having made a bad confession, do you satisfy the precepts of the Church? No; for what the Church requires of us, is a good and salutary confession, and a worthy communion. What! you leave the sacred tribunal more guilty than you were before you entered it; you receive your God into a criminal heart, where sin prevails; "you eat your own condemnation;" you do not satisfy the laws of the Church,—on the contrary, you have immensely increased your guilt! Hasten anew to the feet of the priest, and be reinstated in favor with God by a sincere confession of your sins, and particularly of the double sacrilege which you have committed; then only will you have complied with the will of the spouse of Jesus Christ,—fulfilled the precept, and been worthy of the graces and blessings of the Lord.

My Brethren, there is a very dangerous and a very common error about these precepts existing in the minds of men. Many people imagine that we are not obliged to go to confession and communion more than once a year, because the Church prescribes but one annual confession and communion! The Church, my Brethren, desires to see us often purifying our conscience in the waters of penance, and fortifying our souls by partaking of the "living bread that came down from heaven;" but she knows the hardness of our hearts, our indolence and lukewarmness; hence she is content with

saying to us: "at least once a year, confess your sins" and purify your conscience; "at Easter or within the time appointed," humbly approach the table of the Lord. But if you have a true and sincere desire to sanctify your souls, you will not be satisfied with going but once,—your confessions and communions will be frequent.

Moreover, do you not endanger your soul,—your salvation, by approaching but once a year the sacred tribunal of penance and the table of the Lord? My Brethren, I do not hesitate to assert, that whoever is in the habit and disposition of going to confession only once a year, is but little prepared to perform well this one confession; for it is difficult to perform well what a man seldom performs. A good confession necessarily supposes a constant and firm resolution to live better for the time to come, to correct our faults and keep the commandments: it also necessarily supposes a fixed determination of going to confession from time to time, because, without this means, there is but little hope that a person will be able to execute his good resolutions.

I may add, that the longer a man puts off his confession, the greater is his desire to defer it, and the more numerous are the excuses he feigns for not complying with this duty; for the longer confession is deferred, the more do bad habits increase and grow strong, and the more difficult is it for a person to free himself from them. The longer confession is deferred, the more sins are multiplied,—and the more the sinner is accustomed to view them without dread and commit them without remorse. See then your soul for whole years in sin, at enmity with God, ever suspended over the eternal abyss by the slender thread of human life! Out of the twelve months of the year, you pass eleven of them, perhaps, in a state of reprobation! Alas! your soul is in the greatest danger, and you have no wish to escape! Is this what you call taking care of your salvation?

There is no doubt about it, my Brethren, God, our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church entreat you, and the welfare of your soul makes it a duty for you to go often to the sacred tribunal of penance, and to approach frequently the holy table of the Lord. It is there that you receive graces, light, and strength to resist temptation, to struggle successfully against the enemies of your salvation, to know and detest the enormity of sin, to appreciate and love the beauty of



virtue, and to persevere to the end in the avoidance of evil and the practice of good works.

The Gospel informs us that the first Christians daily partook of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Hence, in the early ages of the Church, we count almost as many saints as there were Christians. But, alas! this zeal for the sacred mysteries was not of long duration. The love of salvation always diminishing because corruption was continually increasing its sway over men's hearts, the time came when some remained for many years without approaching the sacraments; while others, to escape the just reproaches of their own pastors, went to confess their sins to strangers, and received the holy Communion elsewhere than in their parish churches. To apply an effectual remedy to this two-fold irregularity, the Church commanded that each of the faithful who had attained the age of discretion, should confess all his sins to his own priest, that is, to his own pastor, and should reverently receive, at least at Easter, the sacrament of the Eucharist, under pain of being excluded from the Church of God while living, and of being deprived of Christian burial after death. Nevertheless, my Brethren, the present discipline of the Church allows the faithful, in some places, to choose for their annual confession, any one among the confessors approved by the bishop; but they must not make their Easter communion out of their parish, without the permission of their pastor.

It is right that the children of the same family should assemble around the same table, to eat the pascal Lamb. It is meet to range each flock under its pastor, that he may know his sheep. Love therefore to place yourself under the eyes of your own priest; put your confidence in him, no one loves you more than he does, no one has a greater desire for your salvation and sanctification. Give him the opportunity of knowing your souls, for which he must one day answer before God. If he knows them not, how can he give you the advice and counsel you need to enable you to practice virtue? How can he point out to you the means that you are to employ to work out your salvation? It is your pastor who will visit you on your death-bed, and if he does not know you, what can he do, and what can he tell you to prepare you well for the great passage from time to eternity? Moreover, why do people go in search of other confessors? Because they dread the exactness,

the salutary admonitions, and the just severity of their pastors; because they fear that he will try them by salutary delays. What is the consequence? You go in disguise and present yourself to a priest who is not acquainted with your character; you make a confession most probably destitute of sincerity, humility and repentance; you deceive the confessor, so that he pronounces over you the words of absolution; in other words, you commit a horrible sacrilege, and add another still more dreadful when you approach the holy table. Alas! my Brethren, how many confessions of this kind are made in those days which ought to be days of general reconciliation with God! How many impenitent sinners receive their sentence of reprobation in the very place where they ought to find grace and salvation!

Great God! was there needed a command of thy Church to bring men to this august tribunal of mercy and reconciliation? It is thyself who presidest in this tribunal, and who callest to Thee all poor sinners, addressing to them the tender invitation: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."\* Yes, Lord! we will go to Thee, not only once a year, but oftentimes; for we are weak and many are the deplorable sins which we commit, but we do not wish to remain in sin, we desire not to be any longer Thy enemy. We will then go often to ask Thy forgiveness, to beg of Thee to grant us a share of that mercy wherewith Thy sacred Heart is filled. We are indeed weak and very much inclined to offend Thee; but, divine Jesus, Thou art strong, Thou hast conquered sin, and Thou desirest to come to us to invest us with Thy strength, to assist us in putting to flight the enemies of our salvation, in extinguishing the fire of our passions, to fill us with the love of virtue, and make us the children of Thy heavenly Father. Come, Lord Jesus, come; or rather, my Brethren, let us go to this God of goodness, let us often approach this sacred table, where He becomes the food of our souls, let us receive this divine nourishment worthily, with love and with humility, for it is the pledge of a happy immortality, and Jesus has himself said to us: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."—AMEN.

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\* St. Matthew, xi: 28.

## SERMON LXVII.

FIFTH AND SIXTH PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

## ON THE FASTS OF THE CHURCH.

“Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation.”—  
2 CORINTHIANS, vi: 2.

As sinners and as Christians we must do penance. Though coming from the creative hand of a just and bountiful God, yet we can not find happiness on earth; because we have sinned, because we are guilty beings. We are sinners, we must therefore do penance. We are the disciples of a Man-God, who has been pleased to make himself our model, whose whole life was one long penance, who was consecrated to the expiation of our sins, and who addresses to us these awful words: “Unless you do penance, you shall all perish.” Our divine Lord left in charge to His Church to conduct us in the performance of this law of salvation; hence, she has imposed upon us these two precepts: “To fast during Lent, on Ember Days, and the eves of certain festivals; and to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays.” We are commanded to abstain from the use of flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays. Let us make no distinction between those days, when the Church makes none.\* We are commanded not solely, not to eat meat, but also according to the regulations determined by our superiors, to retrench some portion of our ordinary food, to diminish the number of our meals on Ember days, on the eves of certain festivals, and during the forty days of Lent.

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NOTE, BY THE TRANSLATOR.—It is hardly necessary to remark, that if abstinence is not observed on Saturday in this country, it is by special dispensation that we are allowed to eat meat on that day. This dispensation, though at present almost if not entirely universal as to place, is still never given but for limited periods. It has been lately extended in this ecclesiastical province to the year 1870.



We fast during the forty days of Lent, according to apostolic tradition, says St. Jerome. The Church imposes this fast upon us, that we imitate Jesus Christ, our divine model, who chose to fast for forty days and forty nights before commencing His divine mission in Judea. She enjoins this fast, that, by mortifying our flesh, we may be made partakers in the infinite merits which our bountiful Saviour acquired by the sufferings which He underwent, and by the death which He endured for our redemption. He who had no sin of His own, took upon himself our sins, and by doing penance for them, condemns those Christians who fear not to murmur against the holy rigors of Lent, and who, though real sinners, seek in the most trifling inconvenience excuses to exempt them from fasting. In fine, the Church prescribes this fast that we may prepare ourselves to receive, in a holy and profitable manner, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and may celebrate worthily the festival of Easter; for, as a holy doctor of the Church says, Lent is the great vigil of the greatest feast of the year.

We fast during the Ember days, because the Church, our mother, who has established this fast, wishes us to sanctify by penance the four seasons of the year; that we should invoke the blessings of the Lord on the fruits of the earth, and that we should testify our gratitude to God for the benefits which He has so liberally granted to us. As it is on Ember days that ordinations take place, we ought on those days to fast and pray, that we may obtain from God good priests to conduct, with wisdom and zeal, the flock of Jesus Christ. Finally, we fast, to ask from the goodness of God a happy season for soul and body.

The day which precedes a festival is called the vigil or eve, because, in the early ages of Christianity, the faithful spent the night before a solemnity, in the church, absorbed in prayer. Abuses afterward compelled the Church to retrench these pious practices; but she retained the obligation of fasting. Why? Because she desired that we should always be exempt from sin, when we present ourselves before the altar of the Lord, so that we might offer to Him homages worthy of His divine Majesty and of His holy saints. The homage of a pure heart is the most agreeable offering we can present to God; now, penance, fasting and abstinence are means of expiation which serve to purify our hearts; therefore, the

Church wishes us to practice them on the approach of her solemn festivals.

It is for this motive also, that she enjoins upon us to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays. It was on Friday that our divine Lord died for us; and to sanctify this sorrowful commemoration, the Church requires that Friday should be a day of penance for all her children. Saturday was the day on which this divine Saviour remained in the tomb; and abstinence is continued on this day in mourning for His burial. We abstain from meat on this day, which we consider as the vigil of Sunday, because Sunday is truly the day when the Lord designs to shower down with a liberal hand His graces and particular blessings on those who strive to render themselves worthy of them. Let us, therefore, atone for our many faults, by faithfully complying with the duties of abstinence on these two days of the week, that we may prepare ourselves in a proper manner to celebrate the Lord's day, and may be admitted to partake of His graces and favors.

Behold, my Brethren, the holy and salutary intentions which induced the Church, our mother, to appoint certain days of fasting, —certain days of abstinence, and to command her children to observe them, under pain of mortal sin. All of us are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to abstain from eating flesh-meat on fast days, on Fridays, and in countries where the law of abstinence has not been revoked by the Church, on Saturdays also. There is exception only in favor of little children, the sick and the convalescent. All are obliged to take but one full meal, and a light collation in the evening, on fast days. However, the Church grants an exemption from this law to young people who have not yet attained their twenty-first year, and to all those who toil much and are engaged in hard, laborious work. Their labors supply the place of fasts, and it will be a meritorious act of mortification, if they offer up these labors to God in the spirit of penance. The Church grants the same dispensation from fasting to women who are pregnant, who nurse or suckle, and to the old and infirm; but they must supply the obligation of the fast by additional prayers, by good works, and above all, by patience and resignation in their infirmities, sickness and sufferings.

For the exact fulfillment of these precepts of the Church, is it

sufficient to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays? Is it sufficient to eat less than ordinary, during Lent and on other fast days? No, my Brethren, it is not. To fast well, we must join to our abstinence the mortification of our passions and our evil propensities; we must renounce our bad habits and drive them from our hearts; and we must perform good works. Let us join prayer to the fasts which we practice, and let us add to them alms-deeds according to our abilities. Prayer and alms-deeds are, as it were, the two wings which raise our fasts and abstinences even to the throne of God, as a holy father tells us. Beside, my Brethren, to perform well the obligation of fasting, let us join to our abstinences the avoidance of every occasion of sin, and let us renounce whatever may flatter our senses, awaken concupiscence, and incline us to offend God.

Do you know how the first Christians fasted? No doubt, on this point, they are more to be admired than imitated; but what they have performed is well calculated to confound our delicacy and self-seeking, and to shame us for the cowardice we display in our struggle against sin and the passions. Not only did they eat no flesh-meat and drink no wine or intoxicating liquor of any kind, but they abstained from fish, eggs, milk and cheese; they were satisfied with some herbs, roots and vegetables; and they took their meal only after Vespers, that is, about six o'clock in the evening. In Holy Week, they eat nothing but bread and drank nothing but water, and it was not unusual to see those who were robust enough, passing whole days without tasting nourishment of any kind. Fast days were spent by them in doing good, in fulfilling with the utmost fidelity the duties of their respective states, devoting their time to prayer and alms-deeds, and practicing many other good works of penance. They retired from the noise and bustle of the world, and deprived themselves even of the most innocent recreations. They lived more like angels than men, and why so? Oh! because they knew the worth of their souls and the value of the good things of heaven; because they felt how much they were exposed to sin, and feared the rigors of eternal torments; it was, in fine, because they truly loved the Lord, their God.

Concluding this explanation of the commandments of God and His Church, permit me to address you in the language of Holy



Writ: "Endeavor, my son, to apply all the thoughts of your mind to what God has enjoined upon you, and meditate upon His commandments. Fear God, and observe His precepts; for this is the whole business of man." In reality, "what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall he give in exchange for his soul?" Ah! lay up treasures in heaven, prepare for yourselves a place in the habitation of the Lord; "and if you will enter into life everlasting, keep the commandments;" they are the lamp which will guide you in the dark and dangerous path of this life; they are the light which will reveal to you the way that leads to happiness. "My son," says the Lord, "preserve the precepts of your father, keep them bound to your heart, and let them be tied around your neck; when you walk, let them accompany you on your journey; when you sleep, let them guard you; when you awake, meditate upon them. My son, receive my words, and keep my precepts concealed in the bottom of your heart; forget not my law; let your heart preserve my commandments; let them be engraven upon the tablets of your hearts; keep my law as the apple of your eye. Behold, I have proposed to you, life or death, benediction or malediction; choose then life," that is to say, the favors, the blessings, the friendship of God and the ineffable happiness of heaven! Take therefore the firm resolution of loving and practicing the holy laws of God and His Church all the days of your life. We can do nothing without the help of divine grace, so great is our weakness! but with divine grace all things are possible to us, and God will not refuse it to him, who, with heart and soul, like the royal prophet, cries out: "O my God, happy are those who profoundly meditate upon Thy law and observe it with their whole hearts! Give me understanding, and I will examine Thy law and I will keep it in my heart!" Pray thus every day, my Brethren, and the powerful assistance of God will come to you from on high; you will live holy lives on earth, and when earth is closed to your sight for ever, you will enter into the eternal life of heaven, a happiness I wish you all.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXVIII.

ON GRACE.

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*Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*

“I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.”—PHILLIPANS, iv : 13.

IF God demands of us things painful to flesh and blood, such as the observance of His holy law, watchfulness over ourselves, the reformation of our irregular propensities and evil habits, the self-denial which penance and mortification impose; in a word, if He requires of us, my Brethren, the practice of every virtue and the avoidance of every vice, He is not content with making known to us His divine will, but He presents to our will motives capable of deciding it, and helps our weakness by aiding us to do what He commands : this is the work and effect of Grace, the nature, necessity and different kinds of which, I propose making known to you to-day. There is, perhaps, no word which people hear pronounced in Christian pulpits, which they find in books of piety, and repeat in their prayers more frequently than the word *Grace*, and yet, perhaps, there is no word concerning which they have, in general, ideas less clear and less precise. It is therefore a subject well worthy your attention, embracing, as it does, a fundamental truth of religion, one which we often hear mentioned, but which we never sufficiently comprehend.

The qualities of the body, as health, strength, beauty, the faculties of seeing, hearing and feeling; the qualities of the mind, as reason more or less enlightened, judgment more or less penetrating and sound, memory more or less tenacious, imagination more or less vivid and brilliant, conception more or less ready, a soul more or less noble and generous, are so many gifts which we have received from God, and the good use of which may contribute much to our salvation. However, as all these gifts are a consequence of creation, as they are only for the present life, and as God grants them without

distinction to all men, to the wicked as well as the good, to the children of infidelity as well as the children of faith, to sinners as well as just, to His enemies as well as His friends, to those who insult Him as well to those who honor His name, these are not precisely what we call *graces*, or if by some these gifts are called *graces*, they add that they are purely *natural graces*, because, to whatever degree a man possesses them, they do not elevate him above the condition of his nature, and because, by themselves and directly they relate only to the present life. We ought to recognize, in these different *natural gifts*, so many benefits, so many favors from God worthy of our gratitude, since God owes them to no one; but, I repeat it, they are not properly called Grace.

The name of *Grace* is given to certain *supernatural* gifts, which are not a consequence of the life which we have received, but which God, through His pure goodness, grants to us in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, to enable us to attain eternal salvation. These gifts are entirely gratuitous on the part of God, and nothing in us can merit them. The first Grace which we receive, finds us sinners and unworthy of mercy; it is it which, drawing us from that miserable state, elevates us to sanctity according to the measure which the Lord grants us, and the degree of our co-operation; but neither the commencement nor the augmentation of this Grace is the fruit of our own merits. From the cross of Jesus Christ flows this sacred balm which changes the state of our souls, which heals them of their wounds,—which washes out their stains. As with our life we received through Adam original sin and the inclination to evil, so we receive through Jesus Christ reconciliation, sanctity, and the means of preserving it. “As in Adam all die,” says St. Paul, “so also in Christ, all shall be made to live.”\* It is our Saviour’s merits which repair in us the sad consequences of our first father’s disobedience,† and the Grace which He merited for us by His cross, elevating us above ourselves, and filling up the infinite distance which separates the creature from its Creator, after having communicated to us a divine life, causes us to produce thoughts, affections and supernatural works, which merit for us the happiness of seeing God eternally in himself. Such is Grace properly so

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\* Corinthians, xv : 22.

† Romans, v : 19.



called, such the sublimity of its origin, of its works and of its end. If then we do not esteem Grace, it is because we know not the greatness of such a gift. "If thou didst know the gift of God!"\*

Theologians distinguish two kinds of Grace, both of which are proportioned to our wants, and are given us to conduct us to salvation. They call the one *actual Grace*, and the other *habitual* or *sanctifying Grace*. *Actual Grace* is a supernatural help which God grants to our weakness, in particular circumstances, where His aid is necessary for us to do good and avoid evil. It enlightens our minds and strengthens our will by making us understand and accomplish what God requires of us. It is an interior light, which points out to us the injustice or the shame of a bad action, to which our inclination leads us, or causes us to see the goodness and merit of a good deed, to which Grace invites us, and at the same time it encourages and aids us to avoid the former and perform the latter.

There is no one who can not recognize in himself the presence of this divine Grace; so numerous are the secret and manifest ways in which it acts, to make us enter into the great design of our creation and redemption! Sudden and unexpected impressions, encouragements, consolations, disquietudes of conscience which we experience in spite of ourselves, which we in vain endeavor to stifle, and which all our justifications can not calm; the bitterness and disappointment arising from frivolous joys, vain desires, and presumptuous hopes. Who that has paid the least attention to himself, has not many times heard that interior voice, which, in a thousand various ways addresses us, to warn us, to reach our hearts, and bring us back to the ways of salvation? Whence come those fears of the judgments of God, that secret shame, that trouble which certain acts of your life cause you, and which, nevertheless, have had no witnesses but God and yourself? Do these terrors come from yourself? Surely not, since you sometimes experience them even in spite of yourself, and since, moreover, our natural propensity rather inclines us to evil; but the thought, the desire of good and the regret of evil comes to us from *actual Grace*. Whence also does it come, that while reading a pious book, hearing a good instruction,

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\* John, iv: 10.

witnessing some act of virtue, or some tragical death or sad event, men sometimes feel inwardly pressed or solicited to return to God, to put their conscience in order,—to have recourse to the sacraments? It is actual Grace, which, assuming all sorts of forms, speaks to our hearts, warns us what we must do to attain salvation, and when it has excited the will to the resolution of laboring for it, aids us to accomplish what it demands of us. Who can comprehend the sweetness of its action on our will? It seeks to triumph, but resorts not to violence; it knocks at the door of our heart, but without breaking it; it desires to have it opened, but will not force an entrance. It studies our inclinations to accommodate itself to them; it watches the favorable moments to insinuate itself; it employs persuasion to gain admittance; it tenders delights in order to succeed. O my God! canst Thou make men a present better calculated to charm and attract their hearts?\*

Nevertheless, this *actual Grace* does not sanctify us; it does not reconcile us with God, but it prepares and disposes us for justification and reconciliation. This happy state of sanctity is the effect of *habitual* or *sanctifying Grace*. It is called *habitual*, because, whereas *actual Grace* is a good inspiration, the impression of which is not lasting, on the contrary, *sanctifying Grace* remains in the soul, and dwells there in a firm, permanent, uninterrupted manner, as long as we lose it not and do not ourselves renounce it, by yielding to some grievous fault. So that, whether sleeping or waking, —laboring or resting, walking or sitting, sick or healthy, or in whatever state we be, this Grace continually dwells in us, enriches and beautifies our soul, unites it to God by charity, and renders it pleasing in His holy sight. It is a participation of the interior life,—of the sanctity of Jesus Christ, and, by the resemblance which it makes in us to Him, it renders us in Him the object of the friendship and complacency of God. The Holy Ghost, with the bright train of all His gifts, dwells in a soul so loved, so adorned, and imprints upon all its good works a character of sanctity, which mortal sin alone can destroy.

Happy,—a thousand times happy,—they who live in this state! They serve God, not with fear and disgust like slaves, but with

love, like affectionate children. To serve and please Him, is their glory and joy, and the thought of Him, whom they behold in every thing, fills them with consolations amid the most sensible pains of life. It is in this state of habitual Grace that we must live, if we would live like saints, and it is in this state we must die, if we would die as those predestined to glory; for both *actual* and *habitual* Grace are necessary for our salvation.

I do not mean to say that a man may not perform, without the aid of Grace and by natural strength alone, works conformable to reason,—works even morally good, laudable, and worthy of some temporal recompense. For, however reason may have been obscured, and the will of man weakened by sin, he still has sufficient light to know at least the first principles of the natural law, and sufficient strength to resist some light temptations, and to practice some moral works, when he has no great difficulties to surmount in doing so. Thus, without the special assistance of Grace, a man may be honest, just and equitable in the various dealings of life, a reasonable husband, a good father, attentive to his business, even generous, and disposed to perform the good works which honor and humanity demand. But what I mean to say, my Brethren, is, that it is only by the help of Grace that we can perform works useful for salvation, and meritorious of eternal rewards. For, in the supernatural as in the natural order, there must exist some proportion between the means and the end: whence it follows that to attain a supernatural end, to reach heaven by performing works meritorious of it, man has need of a supernatural aid,—of Grace. Thus, in the supernatural order, we can do nothing, not even the smallest thing, without a supernatural help,—without actual and interior Grace. We can not, without Grace, either will or do any work pertaining to salvation. “Without me,” says Jesus Christ, “you can do nothing;”\* we can neither have faith nor the beginning of faith. “No man,” says Jesus Christ, “can come to me,” that is, according to the interpretation of St. Augustine, “can believe in me, unless he be drawn,” and unless he receive Grace “from my Father who sent me;”† we can neither continue nor complete a good act well commenced; for, St. Paul says: “it is

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\* St. John, xv: 5.

† St. John, vi: 44.



God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will,"\* that is, who produceth in you both the will and the execution of the good deed. Hence this prayer of the Church: "Prevent, O Lord, our actions by Thy inspirations, and aid us to execute them by Thy Grace." Neither can we of ourselves prepare by repentance to receive the benefits of justification. "Convert us O Lord, to Thee;" says the prophet Jeremias, "and we shall be converted;"† nor, in fine, can we overcome temptations, at least, such as are violent, nor resist those that are weak, in a meritorious manner. Therefore, our blessed Lord has taught us to repeat this prayer every day: "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."‡ A man may, indeed, overcome one temptation by falling into another; he may conquer a vice or bad habit by yielding to some other vice and contracting some other bad habit; he may resist, at least for a time, an evil passion through pride, and to avoid dishonor; these are victories which the spirit of the world may achieve; but Grace having no part in them, and the thought of God in no way entering into this resistance, His divine Majesty makes no account of them; while, on the other hand, when through motives of religion we resist temptation, that we may not offend God and incur His displeasure, and that we may escape the severity of His justice, this is a victory which is the fruit of Grace, and for which God will be eternally pleased with us.

Let us humble ourselves then, my Brethren, let human pride be confounded at sight of our weakness and total inability to effect any good of any value for eternity. Let us humble ourselves for our sins, because they are our own work; let us not glory in our good deeds, for they are the works of God in us. Let us be ever on our guard, lest self-love may rob us of the fruit of them by making us attribute to ourselves what belongs not to us; our entire merit consists in coöperating,—in obeying the impulses of Grace by the consent of our will. As we could have had no existence, if God had not given us life, or preserved it by His providence, so, neither can we acquire that spiritual life which forms saints, nor recover it after having lost it, nor preserve it without the help of Grace. The commencement of our conversion, our perseverance in good, no less

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\* Phillippians, ii: 13. † Lamentations, v: 21. ‡ St. Matthew, vi: 13.

than our vocation to Christianity, are all equally above our strength; we never could have attained them by ourselves; we would not have even the thought or desire of them.

I say more, my Brethren; although you have been made children of God and of His Church by baptism; although you may have preserved your faith in the word of God, and still hope in His mercy, no matter how numerous and strong may be the impressions of *actual* Grace you receive; without *habitual* Grace, which is the fruit of charity, your life is useless, your works are without merit, and lost for heaven. It is sanctifying Grace which destroys in us the reign of sin and establishes in its stead the kingdom of Jesus Christ, by uniting us to Him. To impress upon the minds of His disciples the necessity of this Grace, our divine Saviour made them this comparison: "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If any one remaineth not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth."\* What is it then that gives value to our good actions, and places between them and the happiness of heaven a kind of proportion, which renders them worthy of it? It is the union which sanctifying Grace gives us with Jesus Christ. United and incorporated by faith and charity to our divine Head, whatever good we perform in this state, under the influence of *actual* Grace, is as it were penetrated, saturated, impregnated with His sanctity; it is elevated to a supernatural order, made worthy of being received by God. The infinite merits of the Redeemer applied to our works communicate to them a sort of infinity, which makes them equal the grandeur of the recompense to which we aspire. Why is it, my Brethren, that the fearful punishments which the damned endure in hell will be for ever useless to them? It is because they will be forever separated from Jesus Christ, mortal sin in which they died, having consummated this deplorable separation during their lives. Why, on the other hand, do the sufferings of the souls in purgatory serve to expiate their faults?

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\* St. John, xv: 4, 5, 6.

It is because they have passed from time to eternity in the state of *sanctifying* Grace, which venial sin did not cause them to lose; by this sacred bond, they cling to Jesus Christ as members to their head, as branches to the trunk of the tree which nourishes them, and the merits of His sacrifice give a value to their sufferings.

Now, mortal sin separates us from Jesus Christ. All our good actions, deprived of the supernatural principle which was needed to sanctify them, are no more than human works, stained with man's imperfections and misery. "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth,"\* says our divine Saviour. It is true, these good works, performed by an impulse of *actual* Grace, may lead to repentance and sincere conversion; in this respect they are useful, and we should therefore, never cease practicing them, no matter how great and numerous may be our sins. But it is also no less true, that as long as mortal sin abides in our soul, the merit of these good works abides on earth and will never be able to mount to heaven. Give a glass of cold water to a beggar in the name of Jesus Christ, when you are in the state of *sanctifying* Grace, and you shall receive an eternal recompense for the act; but distribute the most abundant alms, practice the most exalted virtues, work miracles; if, when you perform these things, you have not *sanctifying* Grace, not one of them all will accompany you into eternity.† And we, my Brethren, who exercise among you the holiest functions, who announce the word of God, teach others the way of salvation, reconcile sinners to heaven, renew daily at the altar the mysteries of Grace and benediction, good works of the highest order, whose virtues comes not from ourselves,‡ but in which we participate as ministers of the Lord; but if, I say, we perform them without possessing *habitual* Grace, if the sanctity of our dispositions correspond not with the sublimity of our functions, what will it profit us to have exercised them? We will have profaned them, and they will be one day turned against us. In vain will we say to God on the great accounting day: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in Thy name?" We will have to hear the dreadful sentence: "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity.§"

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\* St. Luke, xi: 23. † 1 Cor., xiii: 1, 2, 3. ‡ 1 Cor., iv: 1. § St. Matt., vii: 22, 23.



Learn from this, my Brethren, the necessity of habitual Grace, to render our works, great or small, religious or common, of any merit in the sight of God. Oh! how many actions, good in themselves, have been lost to us during the course of our lives for want of this habitual Grace! Count up, if you can, the numberless acts of religion, of alms-deeds, the duties you have fulfilled, afflictions you have supported, the kind services you have rendered your neighbor, which ought to have advanced your eternal salvation, and which yet did not advance it, because you were not in the state of Grace when you performed them.

I have now explained to you, my Brethren, the value, and the necessity of Grace; profit by the truths which you have heard. Do not forget that if Grace anticipates us, we must, on our part, hear and follow its inspirations. Let us not oppose to its loving advances the unpardonable crime of resistance and ingratitude.\*

Grace waits for us,—it bears with us for entire years; but let us fear lest we tire out its patience. There are sinners for whom God does not delay, and on whom, for the example of others, He exercises His just wrath, by permitting them to die in impenitence; with regard to those for whom God waits, there is a term, after which He waits no longer.

Grace procures for us favorable occasions; let us not permit them to pass unheeded, lest we never again find them, and that if we miss them, there will remain for us but the crime and the misery of having once more abused, to our perdition, the goodness of God, who had prepared them for us. May God preserve us from this!—AMEN.

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\* Acts, vii: 51.—Hebrews, iii: 7, 8.

## PART V.

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### SERMON LXIX.

#### ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

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“And of his fulness we all have received, and grace for grace.”—ST. JOHN, i : 16.

To enable us to avoid sin, to practice virtue and observe the commandments of God and His Church, and to attain heaven, grace is absolutely necessary for us, for our Lord Jesus Christ has said, “without me, you can do nothing;” we need *sanctifying* grace, which is a supernatural and gratuitous gift, which dwells in us and which renders us just, holy and agreeable in the sight of God; we need *actual* grace, which is a supernatural aid, gratuitously bestowed by God to illumine our minds with light and to touch our hearts with good impulses. Now, my Brethren, it is by means of the Sacraments, as the Council of Trent teaches, that all true justice begins, is increased, or recovered after having been lost. The Sacraments were established to impart to us sanctifying grace, to restore it to us if we have unhappily lost it by sin, to increase it when it already adorns our soul, and to give to us the actual helps which aid us in accomplishing the holy will of God. The knowledge of the Sacraments is therefore useful and even necessary for all Christians. I proceed therefore to make known to you these powerful means of salvation.

The word *Sacrament*, which is derived from *sacred* or *holy*, is understood here as a sign or symbolical rite, established by God for men as a means of salvation. A Sacrament is a sensible sign, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ to produce in our souls the grace which it signifies. These signs of grace are seven in number, viz :

Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony. They are signs, because they indicate or make known to us other things; they are *sensible*, because they are composed of actions which we see, and of words which we hear, that signify to us the invisible grace which they produce in souls. In Baptism, for example, we see the water poured on the head of the child, we hear the words pronounced by the priest; here is the Sacrament,—the sensible sign: this signifies and leads us to understand that, as water washes the body, so Baptism washes the soul of all its stains. Our divine Saviour was pleased to have regard to the wants of our nature,—to our weakness. Since the fall of man, such is his weakness, that it is almost impossible for him to rise to the knowledge of spiritual things otherwise than by means of sensible ones. It was therefore to assist us in comprehending more easily what His power operates visibly in our souls, that the Sovereign Master of all things has been pleased to figure and represent this mysterious operation by signs taken from sensible things. However, my Brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, the Sacraments are signs which serve not solely to show, to indicate the presence of invisible grace, but which also produce it in our souls when we offer no obstacle to it.

The Sacraments are remedies capable of purifying us from sin,—they are signs of grace which justify us before God; they must, therefore, be effects of a divine power. Jesus Christ alone, true God and true man, could have instituted the Sacraments. It was only the Man-God, who could have merited for us grace by His passion and death; it was only the Man-God who could unite His merits, His satisfactions, and the price of His sufferings to certain outward signs; He alone could form from His blood those divine fountains whose waters spring up to eternal life, and who could open those channels through which these waters flow into our souls, to supply all our necessities, and heal all our infirmities. The Sacraments could have been instituted only by our Lord Jesus Christ; He alone was able to work this prodigy. What respect ought not this dogma of our faith inspire us for these sacred signs of salvation, since the dignity and excellence of Him who gave them to us, infinitely enhance the value and importance of what He has given! With what piety, with what religious awe, but also with what filial



confidence ought we not to approach those sacred fountains of life, which flow from the sacred side of our divine Redeemer, and impart to us abundantly the graces and blessings of the Lord!

What graces do we receive from the Sacraments? They give us, restore to us or augment in us *sanctifying* or *habitual* grace. Baptism gives it, Penance restores it when we have had the misfortune to lose it by sin; the other Sacraments increase it in our souls. Baptism and Penance are called *Sacraments of the dead*, because it is not necessary that those who receive these should be in the state of grace, and because Jesus Christ instituted those two Sacraments to bring to life those who are dead,—to give or restore to sinners the spiritual life of grace. The five other Sacraments increase this spiritual life in us; they suppose that those who receive them are in the state of grace and in the friendship of God; hence they are called *the Sacraments of the living*, as they render men more just, more holy and more agreeable in the eyes of the Almighty.

Beside habitual grace, which the Sacraments infuse into the souls of those who worthily receive them, they also confer another which is called *Sacramental grace*, and which is peculiar to each Sacrament. This grace is a certain right to receive, according to our wants, the actual assistance necessary for us to discharge the obligations to which the Sacraments engage us, to surmount the obstacles which we encounter in the performance of those duties, and to attain the ends for which the Sacraments were instituted.

In five of the seven Sacraments there are three which imprint a spiritual and indelible character upon the souls of those who receive them, and which, for this reason, can be received but once. This character signifies that we consecrate ourselves to Jesus Christ, to be either His servants, His soldiers or His ministers. The princes of the earth have their servants; they have their soldiers to fight for them; they have their ministers to whom they confide the care of their states, and all are invested with certain signs or characters intended to distinguish them from the servants, soldiers and ministers of other kings, and by which they are at the same time distinguished from one another. Thus, Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, has His servants and His children,—the faithful, who are members of His mystical body, and who are distinguished from infidels by the character with which they have been adorned at their

baptism. He has His holy army,—His soldiers, who combat for the faith and defend it against His enemies,—against the impious, who attack it; and they are distinguished from those who have not the same honor, by the character which the Sacrament of Confirmation has imprinted on their souls. Finally, He has His ministers, who govern His Church and distribute spiritual food to His people; these are principally bishops and priests, who are distinguished from the simple faithful by the character which they have received in Holy Orders. This character,—this spiritual seal stamped upon our souls, remains there, forever indelible. For all eternity it will serve to glorify him who will have faithfully fulfilled the duties of his vocation, during his earthly pilgrimage; and in heaven, the angels shall honor in a special manner, those who are invested with it. It will contribute to the torments, and augment the shame of him, who, unfaithful to his holy calling, will have neglected its obligations and duties; it will serve as a motive to the devils to cover with derision and confusion the unfortunate wretches who have been honored with this august sign on earth, but who have been recreant to their sacred trust.

Whether the priest who administers the Sacraments, be good or bad, in a state of grace or in that of sin, he can not prevent the Sacraments from producing their effects, from giving us grace and operating our sanctification; if we, who receive them, oppose no obstacle to them: because the Sacraments operate by the virtue which Jesus Christ has attached to them,—a virtue which consists in the application of the blood and merits of this divine Saviour's death and passion; and because the Sacraments are like seven channels or fountains of salvation, opened by Jesus Christ himself, and through which, notwithstanding the unworthiness of the minister, the adorable blood flows in great abundance, and with it all the graces by which we are sanctified.

Let us, therefore, my Brethren, approach those divine fountains, but let us go with holy dispositions; for, to receive the Sacraments unworthily, is to commit a great sin,—it is to be guilty of sacrilege,—of a horrible profanation of our divine Saviour's merits! His blood indeed flows, but it imparts not sanctity and salvation,—it cries for vengeance. For example; in the Sacrament of Penance, the sentence of grace is turned into one of reprobation against the

impenitent sinners; the divine nourishment of the Eucharist is changed into deadly poison for the souls of profaners. Oh! may God grant that you never experience this misfortune. You will avoid it and receive from God, by virtue of the Sacraments, many graces and blessings, if you present yourselves with good dispositions, if you receive the living waters from the fountains of the Lord, into a heart duly prepared. Come often, my Brethren, thus disposed, that you may work out your salvation. Have a great esteem for these august Sacraments, for they are the richest and most generous gifts which God could bestow,—the greatest evidence of the love which He bears to sinful men, since it is in the Sacraments that He gives His merits,—the price of the blood which He poured out upon the cross: He here gives himself,—He becomes in them the food of our souls,—the pledge of eternal life. So, be sure, my Brethren, that they alone keep away from the Sacraments, neglect them and forsake them,—who wish to persevere in sin, who count it as nothing to be in disgrace with God, who have no care for their eternal salvation, and live like pagans, without God in this world and without hope for the next. Senseless men! miserable wretches!

Be Thou, O my divine Savior, for ever blessed, for having opened in Thy Church these inexhaustible sources of grace and benediction! By giving us so many means of salvation Thou hast made known to the world how much thou lovest us and desirest our salvation. Our most ardent desire shall ever be to correspond to the views of Thy mercy in our regard. We shall go to draw from these saving fountains the living water which purifies the soul from its stains; we shall go there where our treasure is, to seek for light in our darkness, strength in our weakness, consolation in our sorrows, courage in our combats; thus will we live virtuous, Christian lives, expecting with confidence from Your love, the life of heaven,—Yourself,—in a happy eternity.—AMEN.



## SERMON LXX.

## ON BAPTISM.

“Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.”—ST. JOHN, iii : 5.

BAPTISM being the first of all the sacraments, the most necessary of all, and, as the holy fathers call it, the door of all the others, since we can not participate in them until we have received it, it is on this sacrament that we will first fix our attention. We received this sacrament as soon as we entered into life ; but how many are there among us who know not the excellence of the grace which was conferred upon them at their Baptism ? This ignorance is the cause of most of the evils and disorders which prevail in the world. Thus, the Roman Catechism tells us that this is a matter of such importance and necessity, that pastors of souls can not too often explain it to their flocks. I will therefore endeavor to give you to-day as perfect a knowledge as I can of all that concerns Baptism, the first and the most necessary of all the sacraments.

Baptism is a sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, to efface original sin, to make us Christians, children of God and of the Church. The Apostle St. Paul calls Baptism a sacrament of regeneration, wherein the Holy Ghost imparts to us a new birth. When was it that our divine Saviour instituted Baptism ? It was three years before His death, when He received the Baptism of John in the waters of the Jordan, which He sanctified, and to which He imparted the virtue of regenerating souls.

Baptism is the first of the sacraments, in the sense that it must be received before the others, that it introduces us into the Church of Jesus Christ, and that it is the door of the spiritual life. No one, not even a newly-born infant, can be admitted into heaven unless the holy waters of Baptism have purified his soul from all its stains. Why so ? Because, as descendants of Adam, heirs of

his prevarication, dead to grace, in consequence of original sin, we were born children of wrath, the gates of heaven being closed against us. Now we can pass from this state of sin to the state of grace, which Jesus Christ has merited for us, only by receiving the sacrament of regeneration; for our Saviour has said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter the kingdom of God." Those therefore who have not the happiness of being clothed with Jesus Christ, and of being incorporated with Him in Baptism, can never have part in eternal beatitude, and against them the gates of heaven remain shut.

But, if a man can not receive the Sacrament of Baptism, can the want of it be in no way supplied? Yes, my Brethren, the goodness of God is willing that ordinary Baptism may be supplied by martyrdom, which is, for this reason, called the "Baptism of blood," or by perfect contrition, with the desire of being baptized, which is called "the Baptism of desire." A Jew falls sick,—he can neither speak, nor move, nor make known what passes in his soul. Nevertheless, he seeks the Lord in the sincerity of his heart; he already desires to enter into the Church of Jesus Christ,—he repents of his sins,—has a true sorrow for them,—a perfect contrition; but he dies without having received the Sacrament of Baptism; will he be saved? Yes, for he goes into the presence of God with the Baptism of desire, which has purified his soul, and rendered it holy and spotless. In the early ages of Christianity, which were also days of persecution, pagans were to be seen, who, struck with the faith, the firmness, and the heroic patience of the holy martyrs, cried out: "We are Christians," and immediately delivered themselves up to death. They died, children of God,—they were baptized in their own blood,—they ascended into heaven,—and received from the hands of Jesus Christ the palm of victory. Such was also the glorious fate of the infants whom Herod caused to be massacred through hatred of the Saviour of the world: their blood was shed for Jesus Christ, and the Church honors them as the flower of martyrs. But now-a-days, my Brethren, when the sword of persecution can no longer strike down the disciples of the Saviour of mankind, it is in the Sacrament of Baptism, properly so called, that our souls must be first cleansed and purified. And, with regard to your children, Christian parents, remember, that by

the extreme tenderness of their age, they are incapable of conceiving the thought of salvation,—the desire of attaining heaven, and that they must be regenerated in the holy waters of the sacrament. Delay not, therefore, for it is a sacred and indispensable duty for you to carry your children to the church and to have them solemnly baptized as soon as it can be done without danger to their health. It would be a great sin on your part, to deprive them of the grace of this precious sacrament, when there exists no necessity for delaying it. Beside, life at this tender age is so frail, that it is exposed to numberless perils.

In every sacrament, there are two parts, which necessarily enter into its composition and form its substance; this is what theologians call *the matter* and *the form*. They give the name of *the matter* to the things, or the external and sensible actions which are used in conferring a sacrament, and the name of *the form* to the words which the minister pronounces while applying the matter. Thus, in Baptism, water is the matter of the sacrament, and the words: “I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” are its form.

The matter of Baptism, therefore, is every species of natural water, water from the sea, river, marsh, wells, springs, whatever simply bears the name of water. I beg you, my Brethren, to remark here the infinite goodness of our Lord. Baptism being absolutely necessary for the salvation of all mankind, without any exception, God has chosen as matter for this sacrament, water, which is always and everywhere within the reach of every body. Moreover, water represents most appropriately the effects of Baptism; it washes the stains from the body, and by it, the action of this sacrament upon the soul, which it purifies from its sins, is sensibly expressed; water has the property of cooling the body, so Baptism has the virtue of extinguishing, at least to a great extent, the heat of the passions.

By another trait of His infinite goodness, which wills that “our names should be written in heaven,” the Lord, who appoints His priests as the ordinary ministers of Baptism, nevertheless, in case of necessity, permits that this sacrament may be administered, but without ceremony, by all persons, no matter to what religion they may belong. In cases of necessity, Baptism is valid, whether it be



conferred by a Jew, an infidel or a heretic, provided while baptizing, he has the intention of doing what the Catholic Church does, when she administers this sacrament.

There is no one among you who may not sometimes be under the necessity of giving Baptism; it is therefore highly important that you should know the manner of conferring it. I am aware that for the valid administration of this sacrament, one ablution is sufficient; but we must conform to the practice of the Church, which prescribes that the water should be poured on the head of the child three times. It is not enough to let fall a few drops of water, nor is it sufficient to dip the finger or other thing in the water and with this touch the child; the water must be taken in a vase or cup and poured on the head of the person to be baptized, taking care that it touch the body, for it is not sufficient that it touch the hair or the clothes. While you are pouring the water you must pronounce the words of the form. This is the way you must baptize, if ever you are called on to confer this sacrament. You separate the hairs of the head, and while saying: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father," you pour the water in the form of a cross; at the words, "and of the Son," you again pour the water in the form of a cross; and conclude by pouring the water a third time in the same form, while saying, "and of the Holy Ghost." It is upon the head that the water should be poured, because the head is, as it were, the seat where all the interior and exterior senses of man meet; but in case of necessity, the child must be baptized on any member that can be reached, when it can not be done on the head, or any other principal part of the body. Yet, it is doubtful whether this baptism is valid: you should therefore repeat it conditionally. It certainly is null, if one person were to pour the water, while another pronounces the words of the form: it would also be null, if a substantial change be introduced into the form; for example, if the baptizer were to say: "I baptize thee in the name of the Holy Trinity," without expressing the distinction of the three divine persons; for our Lord required that we should pronounce the names of the three persons of the adorable Trinity. It would likewise be null, if the person who gives Baptism has not the intention at least, of doing what the Church does. But, although you should have the misfortune of not believing in the efficacy or divine

institution of the sacraments, although you should have neither the will nor the thought of producing grace, or of conferring a sacrament, nevertheless, you would confer it, provided you had the intention of doing what is regarded in the Church as a sacrament, and the Baptism which you would thus give is valid.

May God be forever praised! His merciful goodness has distinguished us from many millions of men, and has called us to the grace of Baptism. At its holy font we became Christians, there we acquired the right to call God "our Father;" "but when the goodness and kindness of our Saviour God appeared: not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting."\* How many thousands live and die without Baptism, who will never be admitted into heaven! This misfortune the hand of God has averted from our heads, by granting us the grace of Baptism without our having ever done anything to render ourselves worthy of it. We were born children of wrath, and the holy waters of Baptism have made us children of God! Let the remembrance of the mercies of the Lord never depart from our minds all the days of our mortal career, and let our lives be ever pure, holy and Christian like, that we may merit the happiness of celebrating and singing the praises of our Saviour, with the angels and saints in the mansion of bliss.—AMEN.

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\* Titus, iii : 4, 5, 6, 7.

## SERMON LXXI.

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.—(CONTINUED.)

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“According to his mercy he saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and the renovation of the Holy Ghost.”—TITUS, iii: 5.

WE are all, as children of Adam, sinners and rebels to God. We have inherited his disobedience and his sin, and consequently the punishment which was inflicted upon him. Alas! the sin committed in the terrestrial paradise has reduced us to a most deplorable state! We were born in sin,—we were born deprived of the grace of God and children of wrath. If death had surprised us in this sad state, we would have been forever excluded from the happiness of heaven, for the Holy of Holies must necessarily have rejected the impure vessel wherein sin was found. But, eternal thanks to the infinite goodness of God! He condescends to receive us into His arms on our very entrance into the world. He admits us into His temple, to favor us with the most signal blessing of His mercy; one of His ministers pours upon us the holy waters of Baptism, which makes us Christians, washes and purifies our souls, raises them from the grave of sin to the life of grace, by communicating to us sanctification, justice, redemption, the divine adoption, the effusion of the Holy Ghost, eternal life, and the kingdom of God himself. Would to God that I could make you thoroughly understand the effect of this august sacrament! This is the grace which I ask through the intercession of Mary.

“I will pour upon you clean water,” spoke the Lord, “and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness.”\* Such, my Brethren, is the effect which the Sacrament of Baptism produces. It entirely blots out every sin which existed in the soul; it blots out original sin, which we brought with us into the world as children of Adam,

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\* Ezechiel, xxxvi: 25.



and it blots out all actual sins, no matter how numerous, which we may have committed before its reception; it remits beside, all the temporal and eternal pains due to these sins. "There is no condemnation," says the Apostle St. Paul, "for those who live in Jesus Christ. You were stained with all these iniquities, but the waters of regeneration have purified you and you are sanctified. If we be grafted in Jesus Christ by the resemblance of His death, we are also like Him by the resemblance of His resurrection, which has been perfected."\* In Baptism, all is remitted,—all is forgiven, and God communicates to us here without reserve the blood and merits of His divine Son. A Jew, a pagan, a great criminal receives Baptism and dies immediately after having received it; his soul ascends to heaven and goes to enjoy the vision of God, for there is not the slightest spot upon it. Be Thou blessed, O divine Saviour, who hast merited for us these ineffable graces by Thy sufferings and death! How great the obligation which we have contracted, ever to prove ourselves grateful for so much goodness and mercy! Divine Saviour, I will love Thee with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

After blotting out every stain of sin which disfigured our souls, the Sacrament of Baptism procures for us the inestimable gift of sanctifying grace, which renders our souls just, holy, beautiful and bright in the eyes of God. Precious grace, which, entering into our souls, brings us as presents from the God of goodness, faith, hope, charity, and the infused virtues, with the gifts of the Holy Ghost! Precious grace, which induces God to adopt us as His children! We were "children of wrath," and we became, "children of adoption." "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be named and should be the sons of God."† We have, as Father, according to grace, Him who is the Father of Jesus Christ by nature. Jesus Christ no longer calls us servants,—He honors us with the name of friends. Even this is not enough,—He wills that we should be His brethren; He desires that we should be incorporated with Him,—that we should become His members,—that we should live with His life; that we should be temples of the Holy Ghost. Yes, the moment the holy

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\* Romans and Corinthians.

† 1 St. John, iii : 1.

waters of Baptism are poured upon our heads, the Holy Ghost unites himself to us. The same Spirit, says St. Augustine, who formed the body of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary, gives birth to the Christian in the baptismal font. He makes us so many temples in which He is pleased to dwell. I repeat it, my Brethren, to impress it the more on your minds: by Baptism we become children of God the Father, members and brethren of Jesus Christ,—temples of the Holy Ghost, and we are made the children of the Church,—members of that holy society which our divine Saviour came to establish on earth, that He might form His elect, and prepare them for the heritage which He so much desires to share with them in heaven. By this sacrament then, my Brethren, we obtain a right, as children of God and His Church, to partake of all the other sacraments, of the holy Sacrifice, of the good works and of the prayers of all the faithful, whether on earth, in purgatory or in heaven,—to have part in all the graces,—in all the benefits common to this divine society.

What return shall we make the Lord for the signal favors His infinite mercy has bestowed upon us? My Brethren, what this God of goodness demands of us is, that we should offer to Him every day the faithful fulfillment of the promises which we made to Him at our Baptism. What are these promises? We promised to believe in Jesus Christ. We must then believe firmly that He is truly the Son of God, who came down from heaven, assumed our human nature, and died on the cross to redeem the world. We must believe that He taught mankind a holy doctrine, the only one which can lead to salvation. We must believe that He left after Him disciples whom He charged to propagate His Gospel over the entire earth, and that he clothed them with full authority to teach all nations the truths which He revealed to the world. We must believe in the Church of Jesus Christ,—the Church founded by the Apostles,—the infallible depository of the sacred teachings which issued from the mouth of our divine Saviour. You have promised to remain ever united to this holy Church, and to obey her pastors, the successors of the Apostles, in heart and soul; it is on this condition that Baptism made you members of that mystic body of which Jesus Christ is the head, and out of which no one can live in the Spirit of God; for, as St. Cyprian tells us, he who has

not the Church for a Mother, can not have God for his Father. Believe then every thing which the Church teaches, for it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ which she communicates ; perform well what she prescribes,—her will is the will of the Son of God himself.

It must be acknowledged, and we, alas ! experience it every day, that the holy waters of Baptism have not destroyed our enemies. Satan remains,—and he is always a dangerous tempter ; the world remains,—and it is ever full of evils, and of seductions fatal to many souls ; ignorance and concupiscence remain, and causes, alas ! but too many to fall into sin ! The Lord God does not wish to deliver us from this struggle against sin, just as He does not desire to preserve us from temporal infirmities. Why so ? That we may be reminded whence we have fallen, that we should consider this earth as a place of exile, and that, living in the practice of virtue and good works, supported by our immortal hopes, we should never cease to sigh after heaven, promised to those who shall have “ valiantly fought the good fight of the Lord.” You must then struggle unceasingly,—and you must triumph. You have promised not to let yourselves be vanquished, you have promised never more to let yourselves be enslaved by the enemy of God : at the holy font of Baptism you have renounced Satan ; no longer will you have, as master, the father of lies ; you renounced “ his pomps,” that is to say, pride, avarice, cupidity, ambition, those assemblies, those shows, circuses, balls, dances and theaters, where the devil lays so many fatal snares for innocence and virtue. You have renounced “ his works,” that is to say, sin, because the devil is the first author of sin,—it is he who continually solicits men to commit crime. You have therefore renounced all sin and all the suggestions of iniquity. Be men of good will, and the God of mercy who has adopted you as His children, will not forsake you in the hour of temptation ; pray, and the assistance of heaven will be given you,—God will combat with you, you will keep your baptismal vows, and you will come off victorious.

My Brethren, to procure you the grace of Baptism, to make you His brethren and members, children of His heavenly Father, and heaven your inheritance, the Son of God became incarnate,—was made flesh,—was born in misery,—suffered derision, contempts



and buffets, was crowned with thorns, and died upon a cross ! Oh ! I conjure you by the recollection of the mercies of the Lord, to be grateful ; love your divine Saviour, and every day of your lives, call to mind the extent and the excellence of the great grace which you have received at the holy font of Baptism. Remember, and often renew the promise which you there made. Be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, who has done every thing to promote your salvation ; love Him with your whole hearts, for He loved you, even to excess,—even to death, and He has in reserve for you a crown of immortality, if you persevere in His love, in His faith and His hope.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXII.

### SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

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“Then they laid their hands upon them ; and they received the Holy Ghost.”—  
Acts, viii : 17.

By Baptism we died to sin and rose to the life of grace,—we received a new birth, and became new creatures ; it made us children of God and of the Church. But how weak and frail is the life of an infant ! How little is required to take it out of life again ! We must then grow in strength,—we must be fortified in this spiritual life,—we must become perfect men. To strengthen and confirm the new life which Baptism has imparted, is the effect of the Sacrament of Confirmation. In it the Christian, become by baptism the servant of Jesus Christ, acquires that resolute courage which makes him a true soldier of this Man-God. In it faith, hope, charity and the other infused virtues, which were, so to speak, only in their infancy, receive a salutary increase, and attain to that glorious maturity which form the perfect Christian. It is of this sacrament I intend to speak to-day. Be kind enough to hear me attentively.

Confirmation is a sacrament which confers upon us the Holy

Ghost with His gifts and graces, to make us perfect Christians, and gives us strength to confess openly the Catholic faith. Confirmation is the perfection, the plenitude and consummation of the grace of Baptism; that is to say, it confirms, augments, and perfects the grace which it finds already existing in him on whom it is conferred, whether he has preserved his innocence, or recovered it by repentance.

Is Confirmation necessary for salvation? I answer, that this sacrament is not so absolutely necessary that a person may not be saved without receiving it. It is not so necessary for all men as Baptism, nor so necessary as Penance for those who have sinned; but can we, without rendering ourselves culpable, through negligence omit receiving a sacrament by which God pours out upon us His most precious gifts and abundant graces, and by which we are made perfect Christians? On the contrary, what eagerness to receive this sacrament should not Christians display, and how careful you ought to be, Christian parents, to make your children receive it. There is question of making them grow in grace and of rendering them perfect in the sight of God: if you fail in this duty, you are guilty before God. Follow then the advice of St. Paul, and strengthen your children in the Lord; clothe them with the armor of God himself, that they may be enabled to resist the devil and avoid the snares which the tempter continually sets before them.

The ordinary ministers of Confirmation are bishops. This function is reserved to them, because it was reserved to the Apostles, of whom they are the lawful successors.

Let us see how the bishop proceeds in the administration of this sacrament. In the first place, he extends his hands over those who are to be confirmed; then he elevates his heart to God and invokes Him to send down the Holy Ghost, with His seven gifts. He asks for those Christians, who wish to become perfect, the gift of *wisdom*, which makes us love the goods of eternity, detaches our heart from the riches of this world and removes us from every thing opposed to our last end; the gift of *understanding*, which makes us comprehend the truths of religion, so far as it is necessary for us to know, considering the particular designs which God has upon each one of us; the gift of *counsel*, which makes us choose whatever will contribute most to the glory of God and our salvation; the gift of *fortitude*, which

gives us courage to profess our religion openly, to trample under foot all human respect, to overcome temptations, to resist even at the peril of our lives, the fury of persecution; the gift of *knowledge*, which makes known to us the will of God in whatever concerns our salvation, and discovers to us the dangers which we must avoid; the gift of *piety*, which unites us to God in a particular manner, and makes us embrace with joy whatever relates to His divine service; in fine, the gift of *fear*, which inspires us with a sovereign respect for God, and makes us shun whatever is contrary to his holy will. Then the bishop dips His thumb in the holy chrism, and anoints the forehead of the person who is being confirmed, in the form of a cross, saying at the same time these words: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Finally, he gives him a slap on the cheek, saying to him; "Peace be to thee." By this the Christian is taught that he must henceforth be prepared to suffer all things for his divine Saviour, and that he must preserve his peace with God, with mankind and with himself, even amid outrages and insults, which he ought to bear with un murmuring patience. The reward of his courage will be peace,—the peace of God, which is above all the riches of this world,—peace in life,—peace at the hour of death,—peace in eternity.

The holy *chrism*, which is the matter of this sacrament, is a mysterious composition of the oil of olives and balm, consecrated by the bishop. The oil of olives, signifies the grace and effusion of the Holy Ghost, which is abundantly communicated to us in Confirmation; it also signifies the sweetness and power of this divine Spirit. The balm, which emits a sweet odor, reminds the Christian, that he is obliged to diffuse, everywhere, the sweet odor of virtue; to be himself, the good odor of Jesus Christ, for the edification of his neighbor. The unction of the holy chrism is made on the forehead, which is the most prominent part of the human body, to teach the person confirmed a sacred duty, that of glorifying, with the Apostle, only in one thing, but a thing which is a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles,—the cross of Jesus Christ,—the instrument of our redemption.

But, my Brethren, let us proceed to consider the effects which



Confirmation produces in the soul. What are they? In the first place, like all the other sacraments, Confirmation produces sanctifying grace. It is a grace of increase and perfection, a grace which augments in us the grace of Baptism, a grace which strengthens us and renders us perfect Christians. Confirmation produces another effect also, which it has in common with Baptism and Holy Orders, namely, it imprints upon our souls an indelible character, which is the sign,—the mark of the soldiers of Jesus Christ.

But what belongs peculiarly to Confirmation is, that it imparts to us the plenitude of the Holy Ghost. This divine Spirit comes to renew in our souls the wonderful effects which He wrought when, on the day of Pentecost, He descended upon the Apostles. He descended upon them in a visible manner, but He comes into our souls in an invisible manner; He comes to us with the plenitude of His graces and gifts, as when He descended into the cenacle. Consider the miraculous change which the divine Spirit effected in the Apostles. As much as they were weak and timid, before the coming of the Paraclete, so, after His descent did they become firm, undaunted, intrepid and immovable in their resolutions. Then they openly proclaimed themselves to be the disciples of Jesus, the Author of life, whom the Jews had put to death; they went, everywhere announcing to that hard-hearted people that Jesus had risen from the tomb,—that they had seen Him,—had spoken to Him,—had eaten and drank with Him; they understood the most sublime truths of His Gospel, and to communicate a knowledge of them to the Jews and Gentiles, they feared neither scourges, nor prisons, nor insults, nor reproaches; too happy in suffering for their divine Lord, they bore the most excruciating tortures, and joyfully underwent martyrdom to seal with their blood the testimony which they rendered to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To them, the goods, riches, pleasures and honors of this world, were but dust and empty smoke. They desired in this life the cross of Jesus, and, in the life to come, the happiness which He had promised them.

It is the same divine Spirit whom you receive in Confirmation: He comes also to give you light to know the truth, fortitude and courage to practice it,—power from on high to enable you to combat against all those who, openly or secretly, lay snares to entrap you, and wrest from you the precious treasure of faith; He comes to

help you to overcome the contempt and derision of the impious and the libertine,—to raise you above human respect,—to assist you in resisting all the suggestions of the devil, and repressing the rebellion of the flesh and the emotions of concupiscence.

But, you tell me, you have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and have not experienced in your hearts these wonderful effects which I describe. Whose is the fault? It is yours, if you have received this sacrament in a state of mortal sin, if you have resisted the graces of the Holy Ghost, if you have forced Him, by sin, to forsake your souls. If such be the case, do penance, and the grace of Confirmation will revive in you,—will sanctify you,—will strengthen and render you perfect.

How powerful is the grace, says St. Augustine, which we need to triumph over the world,—its errors and allurements! It is this powerful grace which we receive by the imposition of hands and the holy unction in the Sacrament of Confirmation. You have received the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, my Brethren,—you have been confirmed: be therefore ever grateful to God; correspond with His graces and favors, that you may be courageous and fight like true soldiers against all the enemies of your eternal salvation. Never be ashamed of the Gospel; practice your religion; conform your lives to the holy life of Jesus,—your divine model; walk in the footsteps of the Apostles and the primitive Christians,—in the path of virtue, and you will obtain the crown of immortality, promised to those who shall have fought the good fight of the Lord to the end.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXIII.

### ON THE EUCHARIST.

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“Take ye and eat: This is my body.”—ST. MATTHEW, xxvi: 26.

WE envy the privilege and happiness of those people who heard the words of grace coming from the lips of our blessed Lord: we envy the happiness of the sick woman who touched the hem of His

garment and was cured; but, says St. John Chrysostom to us, in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist you see Jesus, you touch Him,—you carry Him about you, as Mary bore Him in her sacred womb. Without ceasing to be God, Jesus, in the Eucharist, ceases to appear as such. He is truly a *hidden God*, and, as it were, *annihilated* under the semblance of the most common food: and all this to accommodate himself to our weakness, and inspire us with confidence in approaching Him. You perceive, my Brethren, that the august Sacrament of the Eucharist will form the subject-matter of our instruction to-day. You love this adorable Sacrament,—you will then, I am sure, listen with attention to what I am about to say.

The holy Eucharist may be considered as a *sacrament* and as a *sacrifice*. As a *sacrament*, it is the nourishment of our souls. As a *sacrifice*, it is offered to God by the hands of the priest. I have already spoken of this adorable Sacrifice, when I explained to you the precepts of the Church: but what is the Eucharist considered as a sacrament? It is a Sacrament which contains, really and substantially, the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the species or appearances of bread and wine. The other sacraments contain and produce grace, but the holy Eucharist contains and communicates really and truly the very author of grace and principle of all sanctity,—Jesus Christ,—the Son of God made man.

This august Sacrament receives different names in the Church of God. It is called the *Eucharist*, which means *thanksgiving*, because Jesus Christ, before instituting this great Sacrament, gave thanks to His Father, and because this Sacrament is the principal means by which we return thanks to God, through Jesus Christ, for the benefits of redemption and all the favors which we have received from heaven. It is called the *Most Holy Sacrament*, because it is the greatest and most august of the sacraments; *the Holy Host*, because the Eucharist contains Jesus Christ, the Host or Victim immolated for the salvation of the world; *the Holy Communion*, because it unites us to our divine Saviour and communicates to us His graces, His merits and His virtues; *the Viaticum*, that is to say, the food and support of the traveler, because it fortifies the faithful amid the toils of their mortal pilgrimage, and gives them strength to pass holily from this miserable world to that immortal abode where they will have all they can desire.



Jesus Christ said to His disciples and to the Jews: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, debated among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."\* This magnificent promise was soon accomplished. On the very night on which He was about to be delivered up to His enemies, Jesus Christ wished to give those whom He had loved, the greatest, the most august testimony of His love, and He instituted the adorable Eucharist. After having eaten with His Apostles the paschal lamb, He takes bread, and having given thanks, He blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you."†

Thus, my Brethren, our divine Saviour, making use of His sovereign power, changed the bread into His body, and the wine into His blood, and thus gave himself to men as their spiritual food. "Take ye and eat," said He to His disciples, "this is my body; take ye, and drink; this is my blood." Our blessed Lord can not like men, deceive; He is the God of truth; if therefore, He solemnly declares to His Apostles that His body is really present, who will dare henceforth to doubt it? And since He says: "This is my blood," who will have the effrontery to say: this is not His blood? No, my Brethren, let us not say with the incredulous Jews: "This is a hard saying, and who can hear it?" But let us with St. Peter, exclaim: "Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life;" let us captivate our minds to the sweet yoke of Jesus, —let us hear and believe the word of the Son of God made man.

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\* St. John, vi: 51—55.

† St. Luke, xxii: 19, 20.

By Him the heavens and the earth were created,—were made out of nothing: surely, the same Almighty power can easily cause one substance to be changed into another. Nothing is impossible to God; He can therefore cause the bread and the wine to be changed into His flesh and blood. Can we doubt it, my Brethren, when we consider that every day He changes the bread that we eat into our flesh and blood? The Son of God says: “This is my body, this is my blood.” Let us repress the pride of our weak intellect,—let us believe and adore.

“Our Saviour added: “Do this in commemoration of me.” Words of unspeakable love, which, by giving to His Apostles and their successors in the priesthood the power of renewing what the Man-God had just accomplished, bequeathed to us forever the heritage of His body and blood. Here then we find the priest invested with the power of our divine Saviour; he speaks in the name of Jesus,—he says over the bread and the wine: “This is my body, this is my blood,” and immediately the whole substance of the bread is changed into the flesh of the Son of God,—the whole substance of the wine is changed into His blood, and the same Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, who died for us on the cross, who rose again the third day triumphantly from the tomb, who sits at the right hand of God the Father, descends on our altars and is present under the appearances of bread and wine. He is whole and entire in the sacred host and in the chalice; and when the species are separated, or when they are divided, He is present, whole and entire under each of the species, and under the smallest part of the species of the bread, as well as under the smallest part of the species of the wine.

I say, my Brethren, and such is the faith of the infallible Church of Jesus Christ, that our divine Saviour is whole and entire under the species of the bread,—whole and entire under the species of the wine, as He is whole and entire at the right hand of God, His Father. It is true, by the words of consecration, His body becomes present under the species of bread, and His blood under the species of wine; but because Jesus Christ liveth, and after having risen from the dead, He dieth now no more; because the blood of a living man can not be separated from his body; and because his body and his blood can not be separated from his soul,

it follows that wherever the body of the Saviour is, there also is His blood; that wherever His blood is, there also is His body; that wherever His body and His blood are, there also is His soul: and finally, as the divine Word is united personally to this body and this soul, so the divinity of Jesus Christ must also be necessarily present both under the species of the bread and under the species of the wine. What a wonderful prodigy, my Brethren! How deserving of our gratitude! "Where are we?" exclaims St. Chrysostom. "Heaven has nothing, absolutely nothing beyond what the earth has. The earth has become a new heaven! Behold Jesus, whole and entire, lives among us. The God of glory, of sanctity and of majesty dwells with the children of men, and we have the happiness of being able to adore Him in His tabernacle!" Jesus is really, truly and substantially present in the Sacrament of His love, and He abides there under the appearances of bread and wine, to be for those who worthily receive Him the food which imparts eternal life,—the bread of angels,—a pledge of immortality.

"This is my body, this is my blood;" Thou hast pronounced these words, O Jesus, my bountiful Saviour! and we believe them with our whole hearts and with our whole souls. We praise Thee, we adore Thee in this august Sacrament, in this prodigy of love, which Thou hast given us on the eve of Thy cruel death. Thou didst wish to dwell with us, because Thou lovest us, because Thou wouldst not leave us orphans, alone and abandoned to the dangers of this miserable life. Thou, who, while on earth, didst go about doing good, still desirest to shower down upon us Thy graces and benedictions; Thou condescendest to be the nourishment of our souls, because Thou wishest us to vanquish our enemies, to overcome temptation and advance with a firm step in the ways of salvation. My God, we will often come to lay the homage of our faith and adoration at the foot of Thy holy tabernacle; we will frequently come to partake of Thy body and blood, that we may receive consolation and grace, strength and courage to do good, to fulfill Thy holy will and attain heaven; for Thou hast said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall have eternal life."—

AMEN.



## SERMON LXXIV.

EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE  
EUCHARIST.

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“If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.”—ST. JOHN, vi: 52.

I TOLD you, in our last instruction, what faith teaches, concerning the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. You are convinced, no doubt, that this august mystery is truly the abridgment of all the wonders wrought by the Man-God, and the grandest evidence which He could have given of the love He bears to us. Assuredly, your hearts are full of gratitude for the astonishing blessings which the divine Word has bestowed upon you. But your gratitude will be still more lively, and your love more fervent, when you shall have heard explained the salutary effects which the adorable Eucharist produces in the souls of those who approach it duly prepared.

The first effect which the holy Communion produces, is to unite us intimately with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The bread which you daily eat, is united to your flesh, it becomes your flesh and makes part of your being. Our Saviour deigns to give himself to us, under the appearance of bread, because He wishes that His flesh should become our flesh, and that His blood should become our blood; because, in a word, He wishes to unite himself to us,—to be incorporated with us. “I am,” says He, “the living bread, which came down from heaven . . . For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abides in me, and I in him.” “O man,” exclaims St. Chrysostom, “Consider the honor which you receive when you come to the table of the Lord! You there eat Him whom the angels can contemplate only with fear and trembling; you are united to Him,—you become one and the same flesh with Him,—one and the same body, as the bread which you eat becomes your flesh and body.” What do I say? No; in the holy Communion, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are not

changed into our substance, but it is we who are transformed into Him,—He gives us as it were, a new being,—a new life, and makes us in a manner partakers of His divine nature! Well therefore may we say with the Apostle: “I live; no, it is not I who live, but it is Jesus Christ, who lives in me;” He communicates to me His Spirit and makes me live with His divine life! Oh, my Saviour! what return shall I make for so much bounty,—for so much love? Thou art prodigal of thyself,—Thou givest me Thy body and blood! Thou givest me thyself, whole and entire! I wish also to give myself entirely to Thee. I wish to belong to Thee without division and without reserve. Thou desirest to unite thyself to me,—that I should be one and the same substance with Thee,—that Thy flesh should be my flesh,—that Thy blood should be my blood: be it so, my blessed Lord; let Thy heart be my heart, let Thy soul be my soul, let Thy will be my will,—let me be united to Thee, in heart and soul, now and forever. But, Oh my God, shall I be faithful to this holy resolution? I can be, for the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist will support and strengthen me in charity,—in the life of grace.

Without doubt, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as is clear from its institution, does not of itself confer the grace which blots out mortal sin, and by which man from being a sinner becomes justified; for this Sacrament supposes sanctifying grace in those who receive it. As material bread is intended only to support the life of living bodies, and would be of no use to those that are dead, so the bread of angels profits only those who live already the spiritual life,—who enjoy the friendship of God, and in whom sanctifying grace dwells. If in this happy state, you go to receive the adorable Eucharist, our divine Saviour, having come as food into your souls, does not abide there without acting; He gives you a new increase of grace,—He fortifies you,—strengthens you in His love, and enables you to lead a Christian, pious and holy life; for He has said: “as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me,”\* that is to say, he will lead a life of meekness, humility, patience and charity, a life full of virtues, and rich in good works.

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\* John, vi: 58.

In the glorious ages of the primitive Church, to be a Christian and a saint, was almost the same thing, and examples of the most exalted and heroic virtues were continually presented to the world. Then might be seen the young maiden joyfully renouncing the most advantageous offers of marriage, to become the spouse of Jesus Christ, and obtain the virgin's glorious crown; the young man struggling resolutely against his passions,—against every thing that might draw him into sin; tender, weak young girls, even children and old persons, feeble in body but strong in soul, encountering the rage of persecutors, joyfully mounting the funeral pile to be burned alive, or permitting themselves to be devoured by furious beasts, rather than sacrifice to idols, and prove faithless to Jesus Christ. Whence did they get this superhuman strength and this heroic love of God? Oh! they were persevering in prayer, and the eating of the bread,—of that living bread which has come down from heaven, of which whoever eats, he perseveres in grace, is preserved from sin and dieth not.

In truth, my Brethren, the holy Eucharist is “a powerful antidote to deliver us from our daily faults and preserve us from mortal sin,” as the Council of Trent tells us. Though this divine nourishment does not entirely place us beyond the reach of temptations, it gives us strength to conquer them and makes them a source of merit for our souls. The ship which carried the Apostles also bore our divine Saviour, and yet it was tossed about by the tempest; but the divine Master commands,—the storm ceases, and immediately tranquillity is restored. In like manner, the holy Eucharist is in our souls, and yet our hearts are sometimes agitated and tormented by the tempestuous waves of our passions; but let us have confidence, for, when Jesus is within us, says St. Cyril, He will not permit us to be shipwrecked; He calms our passions, animates and supports our will, excites our courage, and powerfully helps us to advance toward the harbor of salvation,—toward the promised land. Communicate often and worthily, says the same St. Cyril, and this divine bread will make you persevere in the grace and friendship of God during your whole life, and on the great day of judgment, you will rise from death to live forever. Indeed, as St. Augustine teaches us, those who take this heavenly food become incorruptible and immortal, for our divine Saviour has said: “he that eateth my



flesh, and drinketh my blood, . . I will raise him up at the last day. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever :” he shall participate in the happiness of the saints, or rather he is already happy ; for our blessed Lord adds : “ he that eateth my flesh, . . hath everlasting life.” The holy Eucharist is truly the treasure of the bounties of the Lord.

Jesus Christ speaks, and every disease is cured,—sickness disappears to give way to robust health ; He touches the coffin, and the dead are restored to life ! How then does it happen, that after having so often received into your hearts the body and blood of the Saviour, you are still subject to the same infirmities,—to the same maladies ; that you have not subdued one single passion, nor corrected one single defect ? Whence comes this misfortune ? There is no doubt, my Brethren, that it arises from your not receiving the holy Eucharist with proper dispositions. Though you presented yourself at the table of the Lord, had you not mortal sin reigning in your soul ? Did you not preserve some secret affection for the objects of your criminal passions ? What brought you to the holy banquet, was it faith, piety, the love of God, the desire of uniting yourself intimately to Jesus Christ ? or was it not rather mere custom, perhaps even human respect ? Jesus Christ refused you His gifts and His graces, because you were not worthy of them ; He permitted you to remain afflicted with the same infirmities and evils, because you did not wish to be healed of them.

Let us henceforth go to the table of the Lord with hearts well prepared,—with hearts widely open to receive His gifts, His favors and graces, and then we will not be refused. Be assured, my Brethren, that He will not be content to remain but a few moments with you,—but He will abide in you, if you sincerely wish to abide in Him,—He will unite himself to you,—He will clothe you with His power,—will combat with you,—will aid you to subdue your enemies, to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of your eternal salvation,—He will be your Viaticum,—your support,—your consolation during life, and, at the hour of your death, He will introduce you into the mansions of His Father,—into eternal glory.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXV.

## DISPOSITIONS FOR COMMUNION.

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"The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God."—  
1 PARALIPOMENON, xxix: 1.

HOLY Communion unites us intimately to Jesus Christ, purifies us from slight faults, preserves us from mortal sin, nourishes, fortifies and confirms our souls in the love of virtue, and serves us as a most consoling pledge of a glorious resurrection and immortal life. Such, my Brethren, the wonderful graces which Jesus brings to a heart well disposed to receive Him. Prove yourselves therefore, according to the counsel of the Apostle, before you eat of the bread of angels, and remember that the work is great, since there is question here of preparing in your souls an abode for the Lord himself. You perceive that I come to speak to you on the dispositions which you ought to bring to the table of the Lord, to communicate worthily.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist being the most excellent and august of all the sacraments, since in it we receive not only grace, but the Author of grace, necessarily demands the holiest dispositions, and exacts them more rigorously than the other sacraments. Of these dispositions, some relate to the body, and others regard the soul. The dispositions which relate to the body, are, to be fasting from the previous midnight, and to keep our whole exterior modest, recollected and respectful. A constant tradition, which can be traced back to the apostolic times, has established a strict law, not to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist except fasting. Such has ever been the general usage of the Church,—such it is at present, and to violate this law would be to commit a grievous fault. The Church admits exceptions only in favor of the sick who receive holy Communion as a Viaticum; she allows them to receive the Communion without fasting, that they may satisfy

the divine precept, which obliges them to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ when they are in danger of death. The sacramental fast is more severe and rigorous than that which is prescribed on days of penance; it consists in having absolutely taken nothing, either solid or liquid, either as nourishment or as medicine, from midnight of the day on which we communicate; it admits no smallness of matter with regard to this. Anything which is eaten or drunk, whether voluntarily or through inadvertence, is an infraction of this law, and prevents Communion on that day. Nevertheless, it is not considered a violation of the law, (if something is accidentally and undesignedly swallowed by respiration.) It is not forbidden then to go to Communion, though, while washing your mouth, you happen to swallow a few drops of water which become mixed with the saliva. When you approach the holy table, be fasting, and present yourselves with a modest and recollected exterior.

Under the appearance of bread, which is there no more, in this host which is about to be placed upon your tongue, the unerring voice of faith reveals to us Jesus, the Son of God, the Omnipotent God, the Supreme Master of the universe, who calls us, who is now about to visit us, and whom we receive into our hearts. Yes, we know and we are convinced that our divine Saviour is truly and really present in the adorable Eucharist; is not this enough to inspire us with a holy awe, a profound humility and a perfect modesty when we go to the holy table of the Lord? To present ourselves there in a disrespectful manner, with a distracted and worldly air, might well give grounds to suppose that we have neither faith, piety nor religion?

In what dispositions must our soul be to receive the fruits of holy Communion? To receive worthily, we must be in a state of grace, that is to say, we must be free from mortal sin. The holy Eucharist being a sacrament of the living, supposes spiritual life, and at least the beginning of sanctity in those who receive it. To make a good and worthy Communion, we must therefore be just and pure in the eyes of God. Hence, we read that in the early ages of the Church, every time that the holy Eucharist was distributed to the faithful, a deacon said with a loud voice: "Holy things are for the holy." As if he said: "Let those only come to the table of the Lord, who have proved themselves, and in whom mortal sin no



longer dwells; and let those whose souls are stained with sin withdraw; let them go and first purify themselves in the holy waters of penance. My Brethren, man is very much inclined to evil; and who among us would presume to flatter himself that he is exempt from sin? Examine then your conscience well, before you approach the holy table, and, if you feel that you are guilty of mortal sin, remember that you must have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance to cleanse yourself; that you must not go to Communion before you have received absolution, no matter what may be your contrition; that if you receive Communion in the sad state of sin, you commit a horrible sacrilege.

To receive the fruits of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we must not only be exempt from all mortal sin, but even free from every attachment to venial sin. Strong and substantial food is of no service to a sick body; in like manner, the strong and holy food of the angels, the adorable Eucharist, is of little service to those cold and indolent Christians, who crawl lazily along in the way of the commandments, who have no dread of venial sin, who continually relapse into their faults and make no effort to correct their imperfections. They feed upon the bread of angels, and they remain weak: why so? because they prevent this divine Bread from producing its effects; they place an obstacle to it by the attachment which their hearts preserve for venial sin.

Do you wish therefore to communicate worthily and to receive much fruit from your Communions? Remove all the obstacles, renounce all venial sin; take the generous resolution to resist, with the grace of God, all your evil inclinations; approach often to the tribunal of penance to have your souls purified from the smallest defilement, or, at least, efface every stain by a sincere sorrow. Our divine Saviour told His Apostles, that they were pure, and yet, before giving them His body and blood, He desired to wash their feet. "His design was to show us by this act," says St. Bernard, "with what purity and what sanctity we ought to receive this august Sacrament; His intention was to teach us, that it is not sufficient to be purified from all mortal sins, but that we must renounce venial faults, which are like dust that sticks to the feet."

Although full of life and health, the body of man receives but little advantage from the food which he takes, unless he is hungry

and has an appetite ; in like manner, to make a holy Communion, and to experience the happy effects of the adorable Bread of the angels, it is not enough that our souls should be living and in health, that is, in the state of sanctifying grace, but they must be pressed by the pangs of hunger to approach the table of the Lord ; they must have a great desire to be united to Jesus Christ, to follow Him, and to advance continually in the way of perfection which He has marked out for men. Behold, says St. Augustine, with what ardor, with what avidity the infant seeks its mother's milk ! with what force it draws it from her breast ! but also see what vigor and beautiful development it derives from this fountain of its life ! So shall it be with you, my Brethren ; you will also receive numerous graces and signal favors, if you hunger and thirst for the divine nourishment which is offered you at the holy table of the Lord ; if, like the panting stag, you sigh after the fountains of the Saviour. St. Mary Magdelene de Pazzi said, that one Communion well made was enough to sanctify a soul. Dispose yourselves then, properly, attend seriously to the preparation of your hearts, every time you intend to partake of this sacred banquet, and remember those beautiful words of St. Francis of Sales, with which I will conclude this instruction. "On the day previous to your approaching the holy Communion, begin to prepare yourselves for this holy act by frequent aspirations and by sentiments of love. Retire to bed sooner than usual, and, if possible, rise earlier in the morning. If you wake during the night, let your hearts be filled with some pious thoughts, and let your tongue repeat some sweet prayer, the fragrance of which will perfume your soul and prepare it to receive its Spouse, who watches while you sleep, and who is disposed to grant you His graces and favors, if, on your part, you are well prepared." "The divine Majesty," says St. Teresa, "is accustomed richly to reward those who give Him a hearty welcome." Happy, my Brethren, will we be, if we prepare ourselves for holy Communion in this manner ! The adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist will communicate to us the life of our good Saviour,—the life of virtue on earth, and the life of glory for everlasting ages.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXVI.

## ON A BAD COMMUNION.

“You can not be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of the devils.”—1 CORINTHIANS, x: 21.

IN our last instruction, I told you the holy dispositions with which you ought to approach the table of the Lord, and what salutary and divine effects the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist produces in the soul that receives it worthily. To-day I will speak to you on a matter which I approach only with reluctance, namely: *the sin of an unworthy, sacrilegious Communion*. May the Almighty place upon my lips words sufficiently powerful to inspire you with a great horror for the crime which he commits who receives unworthily.

What is it to receive unworthily? It is to go to Communion in the state of mortal sin. Those who examine not their conscience, though they have the moral certainty of having committed grievous sin; those who disguise or conceal their sins in confession; those who have neither a true sorrow for having offended God, nor a firm purpose of amendment; those who refuse to be reconciled with their neighbor, or to restore ill-gotten goods, to repair the wrong which they have done, to remove from the proximate occasions of sin; all those, I say, must necessarily make bad confessions, and if they go to the holy table, they receive the Communion unworthily; for they are most certainly in a state of mortal sin. Do they partake of the body and blood of Christ? Yes, my Brethren, the divine Saviour communicates himself to the good and to the wicked; but far different is the result for each! While the just finds in this heavenly nourishment numerous graces,—a union of love with God,—a pledge of eternal life; the sacrilegious sinner finds death and a sentence of reprobation; he eats and drinks his own judgment, according to the awful expression of St. Paul. “Wherefore,” says



the Apostle, "whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."\*

Comprehend then, if you can, the enormity of the sin committed by him who dares to make an unworthy Communion. God is holiness; the Sacred Scriptures call Him the Holy of Holies; He is so holy that He discovers stains even in the angels who serve and adore Him; every mortal sin is therefore an abomination to Him, and even the slightest venial sin is unutterably odious in His sight. Yet, it is this holy God that the sinner has the boldness to receive on his impure tongue,—into his guilty heart,—into the heart of a slave of Satan,—of a child of the devil,—into a heart where the devil reigns, and where he insults the Saviour of the world. Oh! sacrilegious wretch, what a crime you commit! You unite the holy and chaste body of the Son of God with a wanton, impure body, perhaps with the body of a drunkard, of an odious blasphemer. You unite the virginal, immaculate flesh of Jesus with flesh corrupted by sin; you unite Christ with Belial,—the God of heaven with the devils of hell! You trample under foot the precious blood of your Redeemer, who has ransomed you and so often sanctified you, and you approach the holy table to murder again our loving Saviour; for, as St. Paul says: "whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink this chalice unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." "Yes," adds St. Chrysostom, "he becomes as guilty as if he had, in reality, put Jesus Christ to death, and imbrued his hands in the blood of the Son of God."

Behold the awful crime which those unworthy Christians commit, who recklessly approach this holy table,—sit at the banquet of the Lord, and receive the adorable Eucharist in the state of sin. Alas! if the Apostle wept over sacrilegious Communions in his day, at a time when the great body of Christians was composed of saints, if he was compelled to acknowledge that the blood of Jesus was already profaned, in those happy days when the faithful often shed their own blood for the glory of His name, have we not reason to fear that this crime is much more frequent and common in our cor-

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\* 1 Corinthians, xi: 27, 29.

rupt age,—in those evil days when charity is so cold, and piety so weak and so rare? When we behold so many people approaching the holy Communion, who scarcely make any preparation; who have no repentance for their sins, who have no will to be converted; who will not turn from their evil ways, who neither renounce sin, nor the occasion of sin; my Brethren, I appeal to your reason and judgment, tell me whether we have not good grounds for believing that there is nothing more common in our days than unworthy and sacrilegious Communion? Nevertheless, I must tell you, that an unworthy Communion is not only a great crime, but a dreadful misfortune.

“He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.” Weigh well these words of St. Paul. The Apostle wished to make a comparison between this divine nourishment which we receive in Communion and the food which we use to support our body. As the food is changed into our own substance, as it is united to us so that it is no more possible to separate it from our body, because it forms with it but one and the same whole; so he who profanes the body of Christ, eats his own judgment, and transforms it, in a manner, into himself. His condemnation is not merely written in a book, or upon tables of stone or marble, but in his own heart; it flows through his veins,—he bears it continually with him. Unfortunate wretch! He believed that he had received his God and his Saviour, and he received from his Judge a condemnation which passes into his very substance: terrible punishment,—which can only come from a God cruelly outraged! Awful chastisement! which brings in its train spiritual blindness, hard-heartedness and final impenitence!

St. Ambrose says, that the most evident sign of a man’s reprobation, is his approaching the holy table in the state of mortal sin, and receiving Communion in that state, without fear and without remorse. With such, faith grows weak, is daily diminished, and ends at last by being entirely extinguished. They cease to see the light,—they listen to no entreaty,—are insensible to good counsel,—to good example,—dead to every impulse that might rouse them from their fatal lethargy; their conscience is hardened by the constant repetition of crime; the darts of grace are blunted against their heart, which the sword of the divine word can no longer

penetrate; they fearlessly heap sacrilege upon sacrilege; if they are not surprised by a sudden death, their last Communion is an enormous sacrilege, and with the guilt of final impenitence upon their souls they fall into the eternal torments of hell. The traitor Judas, the hideous prototype of all sacrilegious wretches, is an example of the terrible truth which I here advance. Scarcely has he received into his corrupt heart the body of the Saviour, than the devil enters and takes possession of his soul. From that moment, he makes immense progress in the ways of evil,—he falls from vice to vice with the greatest rapidity, till he reaches the greatest of all crimes, for he sells the Just, the Holy One,—he betrays his Saviour with a kiss and delivers up his God to the fury of his mortal enemies. It is true, he shortly afterward seems to conceive a horror for his offense, and casts at the feet of the Jews the money which he had received as the price of his treason; but his repentance is not sincere. He falls into despair,—he becomes a self-murderer, and scarcely is his soul buried in hell, when his body bursts asunder, and his bowels are strewn upon the ground. Unfortunate man! He had made an unworthy Communion,—he had eaten and drunk his own judgment!

However, my Brethren, you must not conclude from this that he who has had the misfortune of making an unworthy Communion should despair of his salvation, and renounce all hope of the happiness which awaits the elect in heaven. Oh! no, let him not despair; no matter how great his crime, no matter how enormous his offense, he has still one resource left. The mercy of God is greater than all the sins of men,—it is infinite! The deicide Jew might have obtained his forgiveness; the sacrilegious sinner may then also be reinstated in the favor and friendship of God. Let him go and cast himself, in the tribunal of penance, at the feet of his divine Saviour, and he shall not be rejected; that precious blood which he had the shocking impiety to profane, can still purify him from all his sins. Yes, you can become again the friend of God, and take your place among His cherished children; but hasten,—delay not a moment, and never again add sacrilege upon sacrilege, lest God should forsake you, and final impenitence open for you the depths of the abyss,—a terrible doom, and yet too often the doom of those who profane the body and blood of Jesus Christ.



Great God ! to crucify Thee again, to profane Thy adorable body, to trample under foot Thy precious blood, to renew the treason of Judas and the outrage of the Jews ; no, Lord, no,—never let this crime be committed among us. May all the faithful, guided by Thy divine light and supported and conducted by Thy grace, go often to receive Thy precious blood and adorable body ; may they have a horror for sacrilege, and may they always come to the heavenly banquet clothed with the nuptial robes. Lord, deign to prepare for thyself Thy dwelling in our hearts, and never permit us to find death in this divine fountain of life. Shower down upon us the abundance of Thy graces, and grant us the will to do good and to shun evil. Inspire us with a profound respect and veneration for the adorable sacrament of Thy body and blood, that we may worthily receive this pledge of eternal life and of a glorious immortality.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXVII.

### ON FREQUENT COMMUNION.

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“With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.”—  
ST. LUKE, xxii : 15.

THE Apostle St. John tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ, having loved His disciples, loved them to the end, that is to say, as St. Chrysostom explains it, that He carried His love even to excess. This is a truth of which you are thoroughly convinced from all that we have hitherto said regarding the institution of the holy Eucharist. It is in this adorable sacrament that the love of Jesus Christ for mankind has been displayed to its fullest extent. It is there that He offers us the most precious treasure: His body and blood, strength, grace and life. Were we seriously to consider the value of the gift which He bestows, with what ardor would we labor to render ourselves worthy of being often admitted to eat this divine pasch with our amiable Saviour ! My Brethren, God invites us to

this sacred banquet : may my words, then, have the happy effect of inducing you to respond with eagerness to this tender invitation, and to approach frequently the holy table of the Lord.

The holy Eucharist is not, like Baptism, absolutely necessary for salvation; a person can be saved without receiving holy Communion; but as a precept of the Church, this sacrament is necessary for adults, and the reception of Communion is a divine command, according to these appalling words of our Saviour: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." We must go to Communion as soon as we come to the use of reason, and are sufficiently instructed in the mysteries of faith; we must receive this sacrament, at least at Easter, every year, under pain of mortal sin, unless there be a lawful cause for deferring its reception; in fine, we must receive holy Communion when we are in danger,—even probable danger of death. Christian mothers, you should adopt the pious practice of receiving holy Communion on the approach of your confinement; this adorable sacrament will fortify and protect you against the dangers and pains of child-birth; it is the surest means of drawing down upon you and the child that the Lord has given you, the favors and blessings of heaven.

It is true, those who go to Communion at Easter satisfy the precept; but do they correspond properly to the spirit and will of Jesus Christ? Is it one Communion in the year that this divine Saviour demands of you, when He says: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you? . . . Take ye and eat," He says, "this is my body; take ye and drink, this is my blood . . . Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." Do you not then insult the goodness of your God by keeping a long time away from His holy table? Do you not oppose His designs of mercy, when you respond but rarely and in some manner by compulsion to His tender invitations? Ah! if you loved this God, who is so prodigal of himself toward you, love would lead you frequently to the sacred banquet, where He gives you His flesh, His blood, His soul and His divinity; where He gives himself to you without reserve!

But you say, our holy mother, the Church, whom God has appointed to teach and conduct us in the ways of salvation, pre-

scribes but one Communion in the year. My Brethren, what do you expect and require of your children? Not only that they should obey your orders, but also that they should respect your advice and follow your counsels. Now, you are children of the Church of Christ, but are you obedient to your mother, when you wish to approach but once a year the holy table of the Lord? You can not be ignorant of the fact, that the Church solicits and entreats you to present yourselves there far oftener. "It is," she tells you in the Council of Trent, "with all her maternal affection that she admonishes, exhorts, and conjures you, by the bowels of the mercy of God, to revere the sacred mysteries with such piety and affection of heart, that you may be in a state to receive often this divine bread, which is above all substance; so that, fortified by this divine food, you may pass from the pilgrimage of this miserable life to your heavenly country." "Yes," says St. Cyprian, "we beg of God to give us daily that divine bread which came down from heaven, in order that we may be able always to remain united to Jesus Christ, to live in Him, to abide in Him, and that we may never have the misfortune of being separated from Him, nor lose His holy grace." It is thus we would act, my Brethren, thus we would obey the voice of God, our Father, and of the Church, our mother, if we had more faith, more piety, more relish for the good things of heaven, and more zeal for our own salvation; nor would we be then reduced to the miserable expedient of covering, by specious pretexts, our criminal indifference for the sacraments.

You are urged to approach frequently to the holy Communion, and what is your reply? Would to God, you say, it were possible for us to receive often the body of our Saviour! But we are too much occupied with the affairs of life; we have no time to spare. Do you know what St. Augustine calls these great affairs? He styles them great and laborious trifles. Nevertheless, my Brethren, God does not wish that you should neglect them; but ought you not to esteem your salvation and sanctification far beyond all things else? And what more powerful means to work out your salvation than frequent Communion? Is it not to it you should have recourse, to nourish and fortify your souls and render them steadfast and unshaken in the love and service of God? Frequent Communion will make the practice of virtue easy for you,—it will help



you to fulfill your duties ; it will aid you to live well, and a good and virtuous life will prepare you for a good and holy Communion. Then you will have no need of a great deal of time or of great and extraordinary efforts on your part to prepare yourselves, and approach the Lord's table in holy dispositions. Had the primitive Christians no occupation ? They were to be met with everywhere ; in the counting-house, and in the work-shop,—in fields and in cities,—at the bar and in the army. Like you, they had duties to fulfill as fathers and mothers, and they failed not to discharge the obligations of their respective professions ; yet they found time and means to hear Mass every day, and to communicate very often. What they have done you could also do if you loved God,—your soul and your salvation.

But you say, it is not so much our occupations as fear that keeps us from approaching frequently the holy table. Well, of what are you afraid ?—Is it not a dreadful crime to receive unworthily ?—Without doubt, it is a most horrible crime : but weigh well this expression of St. Bonaventure : “To approach the holy table unworthily, is a crime that makes one shudder with horror ; but not to receive Communion, through sheer negligence, is a damnable sin.” But is there not a medium between these two extremes, which is that of putting one's self in a state to receive worthily ? Yes, there is a medium, and it is not hard to find it. Shun every mortal sin and wean your hearts from all attachments to venial faults ; acknowledging your weakness and the need you have of the assistance of grace, beg it from Jesus and His holy Mother ; place yourself under the guidance of a wise director, and I assure you, that you will never make unworthy Communions.

You like well enough to go often to receive the body and blood of our Lord, but then the world will say that you wish to pass yourself off for a saint.—This is another specious pretext, and a very common one. It is true, my Brethren, there are a great many people in the world who delight in criticising, blaming and railing at the actions of their neighbors. Ought we to fear them ? No. If you receive Communion frequently, who are they that find fault with you ? Not the true Christians,—not sincerely virtuous persons ; these on the contrary praise and esteem you. Who are they who ridicule you ? Men without piety and without the fear of God,—

men who make it the whole business of their lives to censure the conduct of others,—men who know not what it is to love God. Should their miserable talk keep you away from holy Communion, and prevent you from enriching your souls with a treasure so precious? If you wish to please this world, you can not please Jesus Christ, who condemns the world, abandoned as it is to sin. Let not the conversations of fools prevent you from being wise; and for a miserable, “what will people say of me,” do not deprive your soul of the heavenly nourishment which it needs so much; do not expose it to the danger of losing God’s grace, and with it life everlasting.

Who has ever loved more than he who gives his life for the object of his love? Thou, Lord Jesus, for Thou wast not content with giving Thy life, with shedding Thy blood to reconcile us with Thy heavenly Father, but Thou didst love us even to excess,—even to give us Thy flesh for our food and Thy blood for our drink. We know how great is the precious gift which Thou offerest to us, O divine Saviour! We know that, in the adorable Eucharist, we receive the bread of life,—the pledge of immortality! We would often sit at Thy celestial banquet, but the enemies of our salvation, the world by its censures, the devil by his perfidious suggestions, concupiscence by its temptations, continually oppose our good will. Deign Lord, deign to infuse into our souls sufficient strength and energy to overcome all these obstacles. Yes, divine Jesus, Thy grace will support us, for Thy holy Mother will obtain it for us; we will come often to eat the bread of angels, and to drink the chalice of Thy blood, that Thou mayest abide in us and we may abide in Thee, now and forever.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXVIII.

## ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

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“Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose you shall retain, they are retained.”—ST. JOHN, xx: 23.

WE have been regenerated in the holy waters of Baptism, strengthened and made perfect Christians by the Sacrament of Confirmation, our souls are nourished with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, in the adorable Eucharist, the Lord has aided us with His graces and enlightened us with His light: but, alas! we have despised all, we have repeatedly trampled under foot the holy will of God, we have violated His law and lost His grace and His friendship; we have grievously sinned, so great is our weakness! so deep is the corruption of our nature! The Eternal Truth has said that “nothing defiled shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven.” Shall the gates of heaven then be forever closed against us? No. God wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live, and the mercy of our heavenly Father offers us a plank of salvation; for in the Church of His divine Son, there is remission of sins,—there is the precious Sacrament of Penance. I proceed to-day to treat of this most important matter, and therefore rely upon your kind attention.

The word *Penance*, in general, signifies to repent, and expresses both a *virtue* and a *sacrament*. As a virtue, it makes us detest our sins and repair the injury offered to God when we committed them. This virtue has been always indispensably necessary for obtaining from the mercy of God the pardon of sins. God, who is sanctity itself, and whose justice is infinite, grants the grace of forgiveness and gives His friendship to none but repenting sinners and those sincerely resolved to change their lives and to do penance. It is only when there is true contrition in the humbled heart of the sinner, that it can approach near enough to God to receive from Him the



kiss of peace and reconciliation. So, in the Holy Scriptures, we see no example of pardon granted to the unrepentant; on the contrary, the word of God emphatically tells us, that without repentance there is no hope of eternal salvation.

Under the law of grace, Penance has assumed a new character; Jesus Christ elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament,—made it a *sacred rite*, the exercise of which He has intrusted solely to His priests. What then is the Sacrament of Penance? It is a sacrament, instituted by Christ, to remit for those who are well-disposed, all the sins which they have committed after Baptism. In it, my Brethren, we find the means which the Saviour has established among us, to apply to us the all-powerful virtue of His blood, and to heal the wounds inflicted upon our souls by sin. And, since the divine Mercy has opened in His Church this precious source of grace, if the sinner does not have recourse to it when it is in his power, his salvation is hopeless, and no matter how apparent may be his repentance, there is no possibility of his being re-instated in the favor and friendship of God. Such is the will of God,—such is the order which He has established.

The Sacrament of Penance is therefore absolutely necessary, as a means of salvation and by right divine, for all those who have lost their baptismal innocence by becoming guilty of mortal sin. “It is necessary for salvation,” as the Council of Trent tells us. “for those who have fallen into sin after Baptism, as Baptism is for those who are not yet regenerated.” However, the Sacrament of Penance may be supplied in case of necessity. Thus, a sinner who, at the point of death, can not get a priest, may, nevertheless, obtain the grace of reconciliation, if he is truly and sincerely sorry from the bottom of His heart for having offended God, because He is infinitely good in himself; and if he join to repentance the ardent wish of receiving the sacrament, that is to say, a longing desire to confess his sins and to receive absolution, were it in his power.

When was it that our divine Saviour established, in His Church, the power of remitting and of retaining sins? He first made this promise when He said to His Apostles: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” It was a few days before His ascension, that He made this promise.

He appeared in the midst of His disciples,—breathed on them, and said: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose you shall retain, they are retained.”\* Then it was that the Sacrament of Penance was instituted; it was then that the Son of God, to whom all power was given in heaven and on earth, granted, not to angels nor to archangels, but to His Apostles and their lawful successors in the ministry, an authority over souls, which opens or shuts the gates of heaven, since God ratifies there the judgments which they pronounce on earth; it was then that He appointed them the judges of conscience, with power to decide what sinners are worthy, and who are unworthy of receiving the pardon of their sins; it was then, in fine, that He bestowed upon them the divine power of truly and efficaciously remitting or retaining the sins of men, according as they imparted or refused the benefits of absolution. And this power our divine Saviour gave to His Apostles and successors in the most extensive and ample measure; that is, without restriction, without exception, without limits; in other words, there is no sin, no crime, no offense, no matter how black, enormous or awful, which may not be entirely and forever blotted out by the grace of the Sacrament of Penance, when the sinner receives it from the hands of a priest legitimately ordained and invested with the necessary jurisdiction.

What is the benefit, and what are the advantages which the Sacrament of Penance procures for us? My Brethren, to know the great importance and inestimable value of the benefits which the Saviour of the world granted to mankind when He instituted this Sacrament, it is necessary to tell you what mortal sin is, and the immense injury which it inflicts upon the soul. Mortal sin, committed by man, who is but a worm of the earth, directly attacks the Supreme Ruler of the universe,—the Omnipotent God, who could annihilate His enemies the very moment they offend Him. Man, by committing mortal sin, outrages God in His very presence, under His eyes, at the very instant too, when this God of goodness is heaping His favors upon man. Mortal sin deprives the soul of the grace and friendship of the Lord, the best and the kindest of

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\* St. John, xx: 22, 23.

Fathers; it takes from the soul all the merits of the good works which it had performed; it deprives it of all right to heaven, and renders it worthy of hell. How sad is the lot of him who commits mortal sin! Behold, the gates of heaven are closed against him, and hell is open to receive him! But must he abandon his soul to despair,—this poor soul already so sadly torn by the pangs of remorse? Oh! no; let him rather listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, recalling His wandering sheep. Do penance, He says to him, come to me all you who are loaded with the weight of sin,—all you who have wearied yourselves in the ways of iniquity, and I will refresh you. Let my grace touch your hearts,—repent sincerely, take the firm resolution of never more falling into sin; go and cast yourselves at the feet of my minister, make to him an humble confession of your faults, and he will say to you, in my name: “I absolve you of your sins; go in peace, your sins are forgiven.”

How good, how merciful is the Lord! What gratitude do we not owe Him for having established, in His Church, the Sacrament of Penance? This Sacrament opens heaven and it shuts hell, it restores to us the grace and friendship of the Lord; it causes all our merits and good works to revive,—it reinstates us in our right to the kingdom of heaven; it once more inscribes our names in the book of life, from which they had been blotted out; it gives us new strength to walk along the way of salvation! The Sacrament of Penance remits all the eternal pains due to our sins, and sometimes, also the temporal pains which we must needs suffer in this world, or in the world to come; it gives a sweet repose to our conscience,—abates, or extinguishes the fire of our passions,—curbs the desires of concupiscence, and fortifies our will for good.

“I absolve thee from thy sins,” says the minister of Jesus Christ; O sweet and powerful words, which impart peace, tranquillity and happiness! “There is no peace for the wicked,”—his conscience pursues him everywhere. St. Augustine says of himself: I plunged into pleasures, and I found only sorrows. Blessed are they that mourn, were the words of our divine Lord, not only because they will be consoled in eternity, but because, that even on earth, the tears of repentance have their joy,—their delights, and are already sweeter than all the false and fleeting joys of sin.



How great are the benefits,—how precious the advantages which the Sacrament of Penance procures for sinners! We ought to resort frequently to this source of grace and pardon; we should hasten to approach this sacred tribunal, every time we have had the misfortune to fall into a single mortal sin. Delay not,—defer not,—believe me, there is too much danger in delay of conversion. Divine Mercy is infinite, no doubt, but then it has its fixed time, and the Holy Ghost says that the anger of God follows close on His mercy. To persevere in sin, says St. Chrysostom, is to possess the malice of the devil; and St Bernard adds, that it is to render ourselves worthy of the sad fate of that dark spirit. He who, during his life, shall have neglected the Sacrament of Penance, and put off from day to day his conversion, can have but little hope, says St. Jerome, of obtaining from God the forgiveness of his sins, at the hour of death. Be ever grateful to Almighty God for having left in His Church the merciful tribunal of penance, and never permit soul-killing sin to abide in your hearts; but hasten to purify your souls from its defilement in the tears of penance, that you may be reinstated in the sweet peace of the children of God, and that, pure and spotless, you may deserve to be made partakers of the happiness of the elect in heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXIX.

### ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

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“Let us search our ways, and seek, and return to the Lord.”—LAM., iii: 40.

WE know now in what the Sacrament of Penance consists, and what are the precious and inestimable advantages which it procures for those who receive it with the proper dispositions. But to receive the holy and salutary effects of this sacrament, there are five conditions to be fulfilled, namely: “Examination of Conscience, contrition, a firm purpose of amendment, confession and satisfaction.”

I wish to make these conditions as clear and plain to your minds as possible, for they are of the greatest importance. To-day, I will speak of the Examination of Conscience, which is the first step which we are to take before approaching the tribunal of penance.

Before a person goes to confession, he must examine his conscience, that is, he must make an exact search,—a strict inquiry into all his thoughts, all his desires, all his words, all his actions, and all his omissions contrary to the holy law of God; in a word, into all the sins which he has committed since his last confession. Such is the “diligent discussion of ourselves” which the holy Council of Trent demands of penitents before they are permitted to approach the tribunal of mercy.

The necessity of examining our conscience, is founded on the very nature of the sacrament which we are about to receive. The Lord has given to His ministers the truly divine power of remitting and retaining the sins which we have committed; He appointed them the judges of our consciences. Now, my Brethren, how do we proceed in the tribunals of human justice? Is it not the duty of the judge to make a diligent inquiry into the cause to be tried? Must he not thoroughly investigate the case? Could he pass a just and equitable judgment upon the innocence or criminality of the accused, if his crime were unknown to him? Surely not. In like manner, the priest of the Lord, in the tribunal of penance, can not pass judgment on a conscience, the state of which he knows not. The sinner therefore must accuse himself of all his sins, at least, of all those that are mortal. He must come himself to reveal the nature and the circumstances of the sins which sully his soul. It is necessary, therefore, that he endeavor to recall to mind all the sins which he has committed; that he examine his conscience well, for it would be to expose himself to very great evil to receive absolution on a soul not properly examined. If, through want of due examination he forgets a mortal sin, his confession would be sacrilegious and null,—he would profane the Sacrament of Penance. How then ought this examination be made? I know that it would be a signal service to many timid souls if we could determine for them exactly the time, the care, and the application which they ought to employ in the examination of their conscience; but, my Brethren, all that we can say about this is, that it depends on two

circumstances, namely: the kind of life of the penitent, and the frequency or the unfrequency of his confessions. No doubt, the Christian who loves and fears the Lord, who constantly watches over the thoughts and sentiments of his heart, who comes often to purify himself in the waters of repentance, can, in a very short time, make a review of his soul, and put himself in a position to make known its state to his confessor. But can the same be said of the careless and worldly Christian, who exposes himself to all kinds of temptations, who heaps sin upon sin, who lays down the heavy burden of his offences only at long intervals, perhaps only once in the year. No doubt, this sinner must devote much more time, and take far greater care in examining his conscience and finding out his sins. You ought always devote as much attention and care to your examination, as you would reasonably bestow upon an affair of the highest importance. In truth, you should give more time and application to this than to any other business of your life, since the affair of your eternal salvation is infinitely more important than all the others together.

But, my God! is this the way we act? Is it thus that we conduct ourselves when there is a question of preparing ourselves for an humble confession of our sins, which is to reconcile us with Thee? Do we examine our conscience? Alas! we run into the confessional, almost without a moment's previous reflection,—without knowing what we are to say to the priest of Jesus Christ; we say little or nothing,—remain there silent; and our confessor is constrained to sound by little and little the depths of our conscience, and by numberless questions, to drag from it the sins by which it is sullied. We imagine ourselves safe, because, having declared some sins which we happened to remember, we add that we also accuse ourselves of the sins which we do not now recall to mind. But, my Brethren, are you not deceiving yourselves? Are all the sins which you did not remember forgiven? If you have made the necessary examination, without doubt, your forgotten sins are pardoned; but if you have not examined yourselves with all the care, which the state of your conscience required, neither the sins which you had forgotten, nor those which you confessed are forgiven; but you commit a sacrilege. If you are notably deficient in the examination of your conscience, you insult the majesty of God,—you profane the



sacrament,—your confession is null and void, and you must repeat all the confessions, in which, through your criminal negligence, you have omitted to declare the sins which you have committed. Let us see now on what you ought to examine your conscience. Generally speaking, there is no obligation of confessing venial sins; they are not therefore the necessary matter for the Examination of Conscience. I make this remark for the benefit of those scrupulous persons, who very often approaching the sacraments, imagine that they do right in devoting entire hours to their examination, and thus lose a precious time, which they could employ far more profitably in exciting their hearts to sentiments of true repentance. But, as to Christians less pious and more remiss in their religious duties, they must extend their examination over all their sins, for with them it is not always easy to distinguish venial faults from mortal sins.

The necessary matter for the Examination of Conscience is then all mortal sins, not only those which are certainly mortal, but also those which are doubtfully so; it also comprises all the circumstances which change the species of the sin, and which notably augment or diminish its malice. You must also endeavor to call to mind the exact number of times you have committed the same sin. “It is not enough for the sinner,” says the Council of Trent, “to go and cast himself at the feet of the confessor and declare himself guilty; he must also confess the kind and the number of his sins.” It is then very necessary before making his confession, that the sinner seek to ascertain the number, the kind, and the nature of his prevarications. There are oftentimes circumstances which considerably augment or diminish the malice of a sin, and circumstances which change its species; the sinner must carefully examine himself on this important point, that the judge, who occupies the place of Jesus Christ, may be able to pronounce the sentence with a perfect knowledge of the case. To enable you to comprehend well what I have said on this subject, I will adduce some examples.

Blasphemy is doubtless a most grievous sin, one of its own nature always mortal. But if a man fall into it by a sudden moment of anger, by surprise, and without reflection, this circumstance notably diminishes his sin, and perhaps excuses him altogether before God.

To steal a few cents is only a venial sin; but if one takes this sum from a person who has nothing else to live on, here is a circumstance which notably augments the malice of the sin, and renders it mortal. To steal from a church makes the theft a sacrilege. Thus, as you see, certain circumstances can increase, or diminish, or change the malice of your sins; you must accuse yourselves of these. To do this you must know them; therefore, you must examine your conscience about them.

Do you wish then to make your examination as God requires you to make it, and to be able to accuse yourselves of your sins, so that there will be nothing wanting to the *essential integrity* of your confession? First then, fall on your knees before the divine Majesty, and thank Him for the graces He has granted to you. Recall to your mind that it is He who created you, who has purchased you, not with silver or gold, but with His own divine blood; that His mercy has sought after you and invited you, and for a long time has waited for your repentance. Invoke with true filial confidence the light and assistance of the Holy Ghost; beg Him to enlighten your conscience, to dissipate the darkness which conceals from your eyes the sins which defile it. Implore the holy Virgin to obtain for you the grace to make a good confession. Make a sincere and heart-felt act of contrition. Then examine yourselves on the seven deadly sins, on the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, and on all the duties of your state of life, for on all these will you be one day judged by God. Think over the different places in which you were, the persons with whom you have associated, the business in which you have been employed, your passions and your inclinations.

After your examination is finished, once more ask God to pardon the sins of which you have been guilty; and in conclusion form resolutions and take the necessary precautions to expiate and avoid them. Act thus, my Brethren, so that, by a good confession, you may make your peace with God, and be once more placed on the road to virtue,—the only one which leads to heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXX.

### ON CONTRITION.

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"A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—PSALMS, 1: 19.

THE sinner who wishes to be restored to the favor and friendship of God, must come to the feet of the minister of the Lord, and make known to him his sins, their number and species, with the circumstances which materially change, augment, or diminish their malice. He must then carefully examine his conscience. But it would be to no purpose to call to mind the sins which defile his soul, nor can he obtain pardon for them, unless the remembrance excite in his heart true and sincere Contrition. Contrition holds the first rank among the acts of the penitent. It is absolutely necessary, and to be pleasing to God, it must possess certain qualities. These qualities will form the subject-matter of this instruction.

Contrition is a heart-felt sorrow, and a detestation of the sins which we have committed, with the firm purpose of sinning no more for the future. Contrition regards both the past and the future. For the past, it is a regret for having offended God; for the future, it is the resolute will to sin no more. It includes not only the ceasing to sin, with the purpose and commencement of a new life, but also hatred and detestation of the sinful life we have been leading.

As water is necessary in the administration of Baptism, so repentance is necessary to obtain pardon in the Sacrament of Penance. Nay, is more: the baptism of water can be supplied by the baptism of desire and by the baptism of blood or martyrdom; but to return to the grace of God, there is no means of salvation which can replace Contrition. Confess your sins as often as you please, practice the severest mortifications, amend all your vicious ways, still, unless you have a true sorrow for your sins, you will remain always guilty,—



always defiled. Be very careful therefore, that you do not imagine the Sacrament of Penance to consist merely in the confession of your sins and the absolution of the priest. You have rebelled against God—you have despised His law, and, unless you repent of this rebellion, and persevere in His service, God, all-merciful as He is, will not forgive your sins, though the sovereign pontiff himself were to pronounce over you a thousand times the words of absolution. Suppose a man had lived during the space of eighty years in the practice of every Christian virtue,—the purest and most perfect model of holiness; but at the end of his life were to fall into one mortal sin, and died in that sin without having true repentance; what would be his doom for all eternity? He would be forever condemned to hell. But you say, he has confessed his sins, received the holy Viaticum, Extreme Unction, and a plenary indulgence. Yes, but if you are sure that his heart was not truly repentant,—that he had not true Contrition, I must persist in my assertion that his soul is in hell. For, to return to the grace of God,—to regain the favor of heaven, Contrition is indispensable, and it must be *interior, supernatural, sovereign and universal*.

Contrition must be *interior*, that is to say, it must exist in the soul,—the heart must be truly penetrated with it. It is the heart which has sinned,—it is the heart which, by its immoderate attachment to the creature, has been the principle and the source of sin; Contrition therefore must spring from the heart, to destroy its inordinate love of the creature. It is by the heart that man strays away from God; it is the heart which is sick; the remedy therefore must be applied to, and operate upon the heart,—the heart must be bruised with sorrow,—repentance must be in the heart, to heal it of its malady and lead it back to God. To attain heaven, it is not enough to say, Lord, Lord, I am sorry for having offended Thee! If the heart speak not the word, the motion of the lips avail nothing. God pardons, but only the contrite and humble heart; God forgives,—but He forgives the penitent who is converted with his whole heart, who, in the language of the prophet, “rends his heart and not his garments.”

Contrition must be *supernatural*, that is, it must be excited in us by a motion of the Holy Spirit, and founded upon motives of faith. It must come from God, and have God for its end, since it must

lead us to detest sin as an offense against God. Contrition must be supernatural in its *principle*. It must spring from God,—God alone can produce it in our souls : hence the prophet said : “ Convert us to Thee, O Lord, and we shall be converted.”\* You have destroyed the life of grace by mortal sin, but you can not recover it by your own strength, for Contrition is the gift of heaven. Nevertheless, yield not to despair, but be urgent in prayer ; this Contrition, which is above your strength and which you can never merit, may be obtained by prayer. “ Ask, and you shall receive ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ;” knock,—God will hear your sighs, and Contrition will descend into your hearts, for the Saviour has said : “ Whatsoever you shall ask my heavenly Father in my name, shall be given unto you.”

Contrition must therefore be *supernatural* in its principle. It must also be *supernatural* in its motives ; that is, it must be founded on motives which faith furnishes, and not on motives purely human and natural. Our Contrition will be supernatural in its motives, if we be truly sorry for having offended God, because faith reveals to us the enormity and heinousness of sin ; or, because sin offers an injury to God and offends the best of Fathers ; or, because sin makes us lose heaven ; or, at least, because eternal torments are reserved for every grievous sin. These motives are supernatural, since they come from God ; inspired by heaven, they have reference to God and to the things of God ; and such Contrition will obtain the pardon of our sins. Alas ! how many sinners are there, who repent of their sins only for human reasons,—whose Contrition springs from mere natural motives, and therefore is incapable of obtaining the forgiveness of their transgressions ! A man commits a theft : he is sorry for it, and even conceives a deep and most lively sorrow for his offense ; but it is because he has been arrested by an officer of justice,—he will be delivered to the court to be tried in a few days, and will be sentenced to hard labor in the penitentiary. A young girl has had the misfortune to yield to temptation,—to commit a bad act : she bitterly laments her folly,—she weeps most sincerely over her shame, but it is because her disgrace has become public. In these cases, repentance is excited only through fear of temporal

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\* Jeremias.

evils,—it comes not from God,—it has no relation to God,—God is not taken into consideration. It is God whom you have offended, but it is not on His account that you regret having done the evil;—your Contrition is therefore only natural, and God makes no account of your sorrow; your Contrition neither blots out your sin, nor does it reconcile you to the Lord.

Contrition must be *sovereign*, that is to say, the penitent must be more afflicted for having offended God, than for all the evils that could befall him. Sin deprives us of heaven, exposes us to hell, offends a God infinitely good,—infinitely perfect; that is, sin causes the greatest and most frightful of all evils. A slight evil afflicts us little,—a great evil afflicts us much. Now, sin is the greatest of all evils; it is therefore just to regret and weep more over sin than over all other evils, which, however great under other respects, are always inferior to the evil of sin. So, to obtain the pardon of our sins, we must have a *sovereign* sorrow,—the greatest of all sorrows—a sorrow which outweighs all other sorrows. However, you must observe, that it is not in the sensibility, but in the will, that this sovereign sorrow must have its seat; that is, it is not necessary to experience the same outward desolation which we would feel, were we stricken down with a sad calamity or a serious accident. Mortal sin is, indeed, a misfortune afflicting enough to draw tears from our eyes; and if those tears are sincere, we may say of them, with St. Peter Chrysologus: “Happy tears that flow from such a source! They bedew the earth, soften heaven, quench the fires of hell, and blot out the sentence of death pronounced against the sinner.” Such was the sorrow of David, of Mary Magdalen and of St. Peter, who wept bitterly over their sins. No doubt, it would be a praiseworthy disposition to shed tears over our iniquities; but they spring from a sensibility which is not always in our power; they are therefore not necessary. But what is necessary, is, that the will be determined to undergo all kinds of temporal calamities, rather than consent again to one single mortal sin. If this good will,—this firm purpose never more to offend God springs from the heart, then, our sorrow for sin is greater than for all the evils that could befall us in this life; then, we appreciate God as he ought to be appreciated,—then, we place God above all temporal things; then is our Contrition *sovereign*.



Let us not forget that this sorrow for sin must also be *universal*, that is to say, it must extend to all the mortal sins which we have had the misfortune to commit. God abhors and detests, equally, every mortal sin: we must therefore do penance for all, without exception. We can not obtain our reconciliation with God, if He discovers in our heart a grievous sin for which we have neither hatred nor regret. Hence the Lord said: "Be converted, and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin."\* And St. Augustine adds: "The Lord will not have a divided heart, a heart only half converted, which abhors only some sins and remains attached to others. God requires a complete sacrifice, and demands that the Contrition of the heart should extend to all sins: it is only on this condition that we can obtain our pardon and regain the grace of God." My Brethren, I have now explained to you the necessity of Contrition, its qualities, and the motives which ought to excite you to it. I beseech you, do your utmost, that the love of God may be always paramount in producing in your soul sorrow and regret for having committed sin. Repent, not only because you have offended an omnipotent God, who punishes the sinner eternally in hell, but because you have offended a God infinitely good and infinitely amiable. Endeavor to love this God for the future, who has loved you so much, and mingle with your love a profound and lively grief for having exposed yourselves to lose His grace. Ask this Contrition from your Saviour; He will not refuse you, for He came to call sinners, so that none of them might be lost, but that the kingdom of God might be the inheritance of all.—AMEN.

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\* Ezekiel, xviii : 30.

## SERMON LXXXI.

## FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

*You must* Go, and now sin no more."—ST. JOHN, viii: 11.

TRUE contrition, which alone is capable of obtaining for us the pardon of our sins, regards both the past and the future. The penitent must have a sincere regret for having offended God, and a sovereign detestation of all the sins of which he has been guilty; he must be firmly resolved never more to offend the Lord, and carefully to avoid, in future, whatever might lead him into mortal sin and cause him to lose that grace which the divine Mercy has bestowed on him. It is on this good resolution,—on this Firm Purpose of Amendment,—that I intend speaking to you to-day.

When you are in the tribunal of penance, at the feet of the minister of Jesus Christ, and he is about to pronounce the merciful words of absolution over you, you say: "O my God, I firmly purpose, by the help of Thy holy grace, never more to offend Thee, to do all that I can to atone for my sins and amend my life for the future." Such is the good resolution,—the firm, unshaken purpose of amendment, which the Lord wishes to see in your hearts, before cleansing your soul of its stains and restoring you to His friendship. It is not sufficient to say: I am sorry that I have sinned, and with the aid of grace, I will endeavor to correct myself; this, I hope to accomplish. The Almighty demands that you say sincerely, absolutely, and unconditionally: I will correct my faults. You must be decided,—determined to avoid sin, despite all the charms which the world may present to your view, despite all the pleasures which flesh and blood may hold out to your gratification, despite all the snares and assaults of the devil. You must firmly resolve to resist and vigorously oppose your passions, to root out and drive from your hearts all evil inclinations and criminal habits, to break off all dangerous connections, and fly from all proximate

occasions of sin. You must be firmly determined to forgive every one who has injured or offended you, and to repair the wrong which you have done to your neighbor in his goods, in his reputation or his honor. You must be firmly resolved to make a constant use of all the means of salvation which God, your confessor and your own experience recommend and suggest. Such must be your good resolution,—your Firm Purpose of Amendment; and, if you are not determined to act thus, God will not forgive you your sins. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God: for he is bountiful to forgive,”\* says the prophet Isaias. O my God, “I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee;” this is what your lips say; but God hears your heart, which still sighs after the pleasures of iniquity, and which, in a voice louder than that of your tongue, says: I wish to outrage thee more; to-morrow, I will again crucify Thee!—Ah! if such be the dispositions of your heart, your sins are not remitted.

The Father of mercies loves to forgive the contrite and humble heart, but the God of all justice rejects the prayer of the impenitent hypocrite; He will reject you, for you have not the Firm Purpose of Amendment,—you have not contrition,—your sorrow is but apparent,—your contrition is false. How can it in fact be *interior*, since your heart has still the desire and the wish to persevere in sin? How can it be *supernatural* and come from God, since you intend to continue displeasing the divine Majesty? How can your contrition be *sovereign*, since you are still in love with the delights of sin? How can it be *universal*, extending to all your sins, when the resolution of committing these same sins is found to exist in your hearts? God knows your dispositions,—He sees the secret recesses of your hearts,—He sees your want of sincerity, when your lips pronounce the words: I will sin no more. St. Chrysostom compares such penitents to comedians, who personate the character of those in affliction. “They weep,” he says, “they sigh, they moan, and a little while afterward they laugh and amuse themselves as before.” This great saint adds, “that they who make their confession without being sincerely determined to forsake the ways of

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\* Isaias, lv: 7.



sin, have as little contrition as stage actors." But no, you have no intention to outrage the Lord thus, and I perceive in you some inclination to quit the paths of vice. Yet, my Brethren, this is not enough; for God demands a firm purpose,—a determined action and efficacious will. "Go, and sin no more," said our divine Saviour to the guilty woman whose sins He had just pardoned; and on another occasion He said to the paralytic: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee."\*

I know, my Brethren, and experience teaches us the sad truth every day, that in spite of our good resolutions,—in spite of our Firm Purpose of Amendment, we are not sure of sinning no more. Your good resolutions will not render you impeccable, and you must be persuaded that if you were thrown back on your own resources,—abandoned to your own weakness, you would again commit sin. But if you are truly penitent when you present yourselves to the priest, you will have a will fully resolved to fly from sin, and this is sufficient,—God requires no more. Why so? Because, if you have this Firm Purpose of Amendment, you will distrust your own weakness, you will rely upon the help of divine grace,—you will pray fervently and seek the most effectual means to accomplish your good resolutions and remain faithful to them. If you are a true penitent,—if you sincerely wish to sin no more, then you will avoid, with the greatest care, whatever has hitherto caused you to fall into sin,—whatever might yet entice you into it; you will, in a word, shun every dangerous occasion of evil. The Holy Ghost assures us that he who loves the danger, will perish in it. Moreover, does not experience teach us that whoever exposes himself to the proximate occasion of sin, comes not out of it free from guilt? When a man sincerely wishes to attain the end of his labors, he carefully removes every obstacle that stands in his way. You desire to avoid sin: criminal connections, that bad company, those sinful amusements and bad books, have been the occasions which always caused you to fall; you must therefore break asunder all these ties; you must free yourself from them, no matter how great the pain you thereby experience. God desires,—God commands it. He who does not

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\* St. John, v : xiii.

try to avoid the proximate occasions of mortal sin, is not resolved never to commit it again,—he has no regret for past transgressions,—he has no contrition, and therefore, God refuses to extend to him the grace of pardon. And yet how many Christians there are, who come to the sacred tribunal of penance, who solicit,—nay even insist on receiving absolution, without having the will or the intention of renouncing the occasions which caused their ruin! You must be sober, and still you continue to frequent places and visit persons that have so often made you violate the rules of temperance! You must be chaste, and yet you will not separate from those criminal connections and dangerous associations! You must be charitable, and yet you will give nothing, or scarcely any thing to the poor! You must serve God with greater zeal, and yet you will not get rid of that bad habit of neglecting even your morning and evening prayers! You will not renounce the habit of cursing, swearing and blaspheming, nor do any thing to free yourselves from these horrid crimes! You tell us that you will sin no more, and yet you will not forsake dangerous occasions! Is this not as if you said: I do not wish to soil my clothes, and yet I will always walk in the mud; I do not wish to be burned, yet I will cast myself into the flames? No, you possess not the Firm Purpose of Amendment,—you have no desire to fly from sin.

Have you this firm purpose? Do you wish to know whether you have it or not? Examine whether you follow the advice of your confessor even when he enjoins things difficult; see if you avoid evil occasions, by making use of the means which he prescribed for you; see if you seriously labor to uproot your dangerous or sinful habits. A sick man would surely act unreasonably, who, desiring to be cured, would, nevertheless, refuse to take the medicine prescribed by his physician.

If you have a sincere and Firm Purpose of Amendment, ordinarily speaking, you will persevere. St. Gregory the Great says: to do penance, is to weep over past sins and never again do ought deserving tears. So, when we easily relapse into sin, when we make hardly any effort to avoid it, when we fall back into our old habits almost immediately after confession, it is greatly to be feared that our Purpose of Amendment was not sincere, that we have not been truly penitent, and consequently that we have not obtained from God the forgiveness of our crimes.

Do you understand now why your director sometimes refused you absolution? Was it because you accused yourself of numerous and grievous sins? No! but it was because he was prudently convinced that you had neither contrition, nor a Firm Purpose of Amendment; that you would not sincerely renounce sin,—the occasion of sin and bad habits; that you would not forgive your enemies; would not restore ill-gotten goods; that you would neither follow his advice, nor employ the means which he pointed out to you as necessary for your correction and the amendment of your life. This is what prevented the minister of Jesus Christ from giving you absolution. You yourself did not desire it, since you refused to render yourself worthy of it. And truly, I would be profoundly afflicted if I knew that in so sad a state of conscience you were to meet a confessor, who, fearing to appear severe, would be weak enough to pronounce the words of absolution over all sorts of penitents, whether they had a Firm Purpose of Amendment or not. Such as these damn both themselves and their penitents.

I beseech you, my dear Brethren, every time you go to confession, form the sincere and firm resolution, not only to avoid sin, but also to fly the occasions of sin, and seriously to labor in strengthening yourselves in your change of life. No doubt, you will meet with many obstacles from evil propensities and bad habits; no doubt, you will still be tempted to relapse into your old sins, to fail in your good resolutions; but remember that the kingdom of God suffers violence, and that the grace of God is all-powerful. Ask this grace, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin; she will obtain it for you, and through it you will be strong. Remember that it is worth doing something to attain the happiness of heaven. Remember that if you persevere in virtue, a great recompense awaits you; that, if you are faithful to your firm purposes, you will be crowned with glory in a happy eternity.—AMEN.



## SERMON LXXXII.

## ON CONFESSION.

"Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed."—  
PSALMS, lxxxiv : 11.

THE sinner has carefully examined his conscience,—he is repentant, and firmly purposes to sin no more: is his sin forgiven him? Not yet; he has still to make an humble Confession of them to a priest lawfully authorized to absolve him. It is in the tribunal of penance that mercy and truth meet and give each other the kiss of peace. Truth proceeds from the mouth of the sinner, and the mercy of God descends from heaven and pronounces the consoling sentence of absolution, which purifies the soul from all its stains and makes it as white as snow. You understand that I intend speaking to you to-day of Confession, the fourth condition necessary for the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

Confession is an humble, sincere and entire accusation of our sins to an approved priest, in order to obtain absolution for them from him. We say that Confession is an *accusation*, and not a simple declaration, not a mere recital of our sins, because we must appear at the tribunal of penance as criminals before our Judge, and act as accusers against ourselves, by confessing our sins. Every priest has not jurisdiction to hear our Confession and absolve us. He must be approved by the bishop of the diocese, and have jurisdiction to exercise the "power of Holy Orders," which were conferred on him at his ordination. This accusation is made to the priest, to "receive from him absolution," that is, with the intention of obtaining from him a sentence of mercy and reconciliation with God. What goodness! What mercy on the part of our God! Criminals appear before earthly judges to be condemned, and it is to be pardoned and justified that the penitent sinner appears before the priest whom Jesus Christ has appointed as his judge.

Confession having been instituted by our divine Lord himself, it follows that it is absolutely necessary for our reconciliation with God, to have recourse to this means, whenever we have had the misfortune to commit mortal sin, unless there exist an impossibility of going to Confession. Then an act of perfect contrition, accompanied by the sincere desire of going to Confession, obtains our pardon. Confession has ever been regarded and practiced in the Church for more than eighteen hundred years, as a necessary consequence of the power of remitting and retaining sins, which our Saviour bestowed upon His Apostles and their successors: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose you shall retain, they are retained."\* He therefore wished that priests, His vicars on earth, should be so many judges, before whom Christians must appear to accuse themselves of all the mortal sins which defile their conscience, that, by the power which these judges have received, they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness, or refuse it if they find the sinner not properly disposed to receive it. Priests therefore are judges, and, as such, to pronounce sentence they must have a perfect knowledge of the cause submitted to their decision. The penitent then must give evidence against himself,—he must declare his sins to the priest. Why so? Does he confess them to ascertain whether they can be forgiven? By no means; for there is no crime, no matter how grievous, that can not be pardoned. Why then is he bound to declare them to the priest? In order that the minister of God may know the number, the malice and the circumstances of his sins; that he may see what is the state of the penitent's soul; whether he truly repents of his faults, is willing to repair the wrongs he has done, to forgive all his enemies, to amend his life; in a word, that he may be able to judge from the disposition in which he finds the sinner, whether he really deserves pardon. Such is the order established by the Saviour of the world. The accusation of our sins is therefore necessary: it is an article of faith, and the Church condemns as a heretic, any one who presumes to deny that sacramental Confession is by divine appointment necessary for eternal salvation.†

We must confess our sins; but when must we confess them?

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\* St. John, xx : 23.

† Council of Trent, Sess.: 14 Con.

Not only once a year, and to satisfy the ecclesiastical precept of annual Confession, but every time that we find that we are in probable danger of death, or on the point of exposing ourselves to death; every time also that we have the misfortune of falling into mortal sin. Oh! then, my Brethren, let us go to Confession as soon as we can, for we can not neglect doing so without exposing ourselves to become hardened in evil. "Delay not your conversion to the Lord," says the Holy Ghost. The uncertainty of life, and the advice which our divine Saviour has given us to hold ourselves always in readiness, that we may not be surprised, ought to determine us to hasten as soon as possible to the salutary remedy of Confession.

"Go, therefore, and show yourself to the priest," if you wish to obtain the remission of your sins and the cure of your spiritual wounds. Go, for it is a commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ. Go, and, if your Confession be well made, the priest, who is your judge, but a judge who understands what it is to be merciful and compassionate, will pronounce over your soul the sentence of grace and pardon, and all your sins shall be effaced; they shall be as if they had never been. But to obtain this immense favor, your Confession must be performed *well*; it must be *humble, sincere and entire*.

The sinner must not be content with bringing to the feet of the representative of Jesus Christ a truly contrite heart, his heart must also be *humbled*. He must be humble in his exterior; he ought to present himself at the tribunal of penance in a decent and modest dress, on his knees, in the posture of a culprit supplicating mercy. He must be humble in the manner of declaring his sins: he ought to abase himself before God, in acknowledgment of his misery and of the need which he has of the mercy of the Lord.

Is there, in fact, any sentiment more becoming the sinner, than that of profound humility? What is he at the feet of the minister of Jesus Christ? Is he not a criminal at the tribunal of the King of kings, whom he has grievously offended, from whom he implores mercy and the pardon of his sins? Does he not come as a poor, sick man, to expose to the view of his physician the wounds of his afflicted soul, and beseech him to apply a remedy? Is he not a man overwhelmed with misfortunes, who comes to reveal his sad position to his best and dearest friend, and ask of him aid, counsel



and assistance? What should pass in the heart of such a man, and what dispositions should he manifest? Should he be proud and haughty? Should he be cold and indifferent? Were he to present himself thus, would he deserve the pardon, the cure, the divine assistance which he solicits? Sinners, you have all offended the Lord,—you have all despised the laws of God,—you have revolted against the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth,—you have trampled under foot the orders and commandments of your heavenly Father; must you not therefore humble yourselves in the presence of your Judge? Must not the pangs which proceed from the wounds inflicted upon your souls by sin, wring from your hearts sighs of regret? And if you feel as you ought the sad state in which sin has left you, will not sadness and grief be depicted upon your countenance, when you go to deposit the secret of your misfortunes in the bosom of your confessor, the best and dearest friend you have on earth? What a beautiful example of repentance do you not behold in the publican mentioned in the Gospel! He stops at the entrance of the temple;—he dares not advance to the altar of the Lord;—he keeps his eyes steadfastly fixed on the earth, deeming himself not worthy to raise them toward heaven;—he strikes his breast, and exclaims: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.\*

What then must we think of numberless Christians of our times, who come to Confession without the least degree of humility; who consider it as a disgrace, as a degradation to humble themselves in the sacred tribunal; who dread being recognized as penitents, and who, when they are induced to perform this sacred duty, take special care that they will be seen by as few as possible? What must we think of those penitents, who, at the very moment when they ought to be absorbed in recalling to mind their sins and exciting in their hearts a deep sorrow for them, suffer their eyes to gaze in idle curiosity on every object around them, who laugh, jest and joke with their neighbors, whom they distract, and finally, hurry with scandalous violence into the confessional? What must we think of those penitents, who do not accuse themselves, but boldly and unblushingly relate the history of their sins, and demand absolution,

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\* St. Luke, xviii : 13.

not as a favor, but rather as a reward of their insolence? What must we think of those penitents who suffer themselves to get into angry disputes with their confessor, resist his advice, repel his counsels, and reject the penance which he thinks it his duty to impose upon them, and tell him that they will never again go to Confession, when, for good reasons, he, in his wisdom and prudence, judges it necessary to defer absolution? Do these Christians confess their sins with humility and repentance? Can they hope that God will receive them into His favor and friendship and extend to them the forgiveness of their sins?

Ah! my Brethren, if you wish that the Sacrament of Penance should blot out the sins that defile your souls, humble yourselves in the presence of God. Call to mind what you have done, what you have lost, what you were, and what you have become. You have sinned; you have lost the friendship of God, and all your rights to the kingdom of heaven; you were children of God, and you have become the slaves of Satan. Alas! how guilty you have become,—you who commit mortal sin! How deserving of eternal chastisements! But God, in His mercy, wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted, and that the humble Confession of his faults should efface his crime and restore him to life. Come therefore, you who are laden with iniquity,—come to your Physician,—come to the tribunal of Jesus Christ, but come with humble and contrite hearts; and, no matter how disgusting may be your disease, no matter how deep may be the wounds of your soul, the priest of God will pour upon them the oil and wine of divine grace, and they shall be healed. Though you have committed the greatest iniquities,—the most frightful and execrable crimes, come, make an humble, sincere and sorrowful Confession of them,—and all will be forgiven you,—the friendship of God will be restored to you,—the priest of the Most High will open to you anew the road to heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXXIII.

## ON CONFESSION.—(CONTINUED.)

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“Be not ashamed to confess thy sins.”—ECCLESIASTICUS, iv : 31.

IN our last instruction, I endeavored to convince you of the necessity of Confession, and to prove to you that it is of divine institution ; I told you that, if we go to confess our sins to the priest, it is because Jesus Christ has commanded us to do so ; that our Confession must be made with great humility of heart, because every sinner is a culprit, who comes into the presence of God to implore His mercy, and to obtain His grace and pardon. To-day, I will proceed to explain the other qualities which should be found in a good Confession. The Confession must not only be *humble*, it must also be *sincere* and *entire*.

What must you do to render your Confession sincere ? To make a sincere Confession, you must declare your sins with simplicity, as you know them, after a careful and serious examination of conscience, without diminishing, augmenting or excusing them. You must tell things as they are, as they exist in your mind and conscience, without disguising or concealing any thing ; you must manifest your soul, such as it is, to the view of Christ’s minister, that he may grant or defer absolution, with a complete knowledge of your case and according to the dispositions which he shall recognize in your heart. It is not indeed your desire to insult the divine Mercy, by boldly lying in the tribunal of penance ; that would be too frightful ; but you are afraid lest your confessor might know you too well : therefore, yielding to this false shame, you cloak yourself up, you disguise yourself, artfully mixing one thing with another, gliding rapidly over what you are unwilling to express fully ; in a word, lifting only in part the veil which covers your conscience. Do not deceive yourself, for you have made only a



piecemeal Confession, a Confession imperfect and null ; you have not received pardon, for God hath said : “ Woe to them that are of a double heart.”\*

Instead of avowing his guilt and confessing his sin, Adam replied to the Lord : the woman whom Thou hast given me, made me eat of this fruit. Eve, on her part, cast the blame on the serpent. Is it not thus that you act in Confession ? Do you not attribute your faults sometimes to the violence of temptation, sometimes to the solicitations of persons with whom you have sinned, or to the occasions into which others enticed you ? One man says : I often get angry, but then, I have a wife who contradicts me in every thing. Another says : I have committed this foul sin, but I could not help it, my passions are so fiery and violent ! I have committed such and such sins, but it was because I have been drawn into bad company. I was allured into the dangerous and fatal occasion of evil. Why try to disguise yourselves ? Why attempt to shift the blame from your own shoulders ? You gain nothing by it ; for God sees the deplorable wound of your conscience through all these subterfuges. The prophet David, said : “ I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my injustice I have not concealed. I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord ; and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin.”† Sinners, you also will experience the salutary effect of the mercies of the Lord, if you make an humble, sincere and *entire* Confession of the sins which weigh upon your conscience.

What must be done to render your Confession *entire* ? You must accuse yourselves of all the mortal sins which you have committed, and declare their number and notable circumstances, especially such as change their species.

God requires that you should express *the species of sin*, without which, your confessor will not know the fault which you have committed, neither can he estimate its grievousness, nor apply the proper remedies. For example, it will not do to say to the priest : “ I accuse myself of having committed some mortal sins ;” you must tell what are these mortal sins : for, who does not know that it is one thing to blaspheme, another, and a very different thing to

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\* Ecclesiasticus, ii : 14.

† Psalms, xxxi : 5.

steal or to get drunk? But is it sufficient to tell what is called the *genus* or *kind* of sin which you have committed, as, for example, to say: "I have sinned against charity?" No; you must specify the act, and make known to your confessor whether it was by slander, detraction, calumny, rash judgments or some other way, that you committed the sin against charity.

That your Confession may be *entire*, you must declare "the number of times that you have committed each sin," for, each time that you relapsed into the same sin you committed a new offence, and you must bring to the tribunal of the confessor your sins such as you know them. Thus, to say that you have committed a mortal sin only twice, while you know, or you would have known, had you taken the trouble to examine your conscience properly, that you had committed it three or four times, is to conceal one or two sins,—it is to make a sacrilegious Confession. But the confessor asks the penitent to state the number of his sins, and he is answered: "I did it sometimes,—not often." What should we think of these forms of expression? That they are too vague, and are sufficient only when we can give no more definite answer. But you have fallen so often into such a sin, that it is impossible to determine the number of your falls; you must, then, at least, state the length of time you have remained in the habit of that sin, and you must tell as nearly as possible, how often you committed it during the day, week, or month.

That your Confession may be *entire*, you must also declare all the circumstances which change the species of the sin, that is, those circumstances which add to the malice peculiar to one sin, a new malice of a different nature. For example, a man steals from a Church; this sin, beside its being contrary to justice, is also opposed to the virtue of religion, and is a sacrilege. If then this man should go to Confession, and content himself with saying to his confessor, I accuse myself of having stolen such an article, who does not see that, if he declares the theft, he conceals the sacrilege, and that his Confession is not *entire*?

You must also confess the notably aggravating circumstances, that is, those which, without changing the species of the sin, yet materially increase its malice. For example, you have unfortunately stolen fifty cents from a very poor person; it is evident that

this is a much greater sin than if you had stolen this sum from a very rich man, or had only taken a few cents.

Finally, that your Confession may be entire, you must declare the bad intention with which you committed the sin. For example, you have given expression to a light detraction; but by it you wished to awaken evil suspicions in the mind of your hearer, and to injure considerably the person against whom you uttered the detraction; you must accuse yourself of this circumstance in Confession. You must also accuse yourself of the sins which you suffered others to commit, while you could and ought to have prevented them. You must accuse yourself of the scandals which you have given, the injuries which you have caused to your neighbor, in his honor, his reputation or his goods.

Do you receive pardon for a mortal sin, of which you do not accuse yourselves, because, after due and sufficient examination, you did not remember it? Yes, this sin is remitted with the others; but, if you remember it afterward, you are obliged to mention it in your next Confession. While on the other hand, if by grievously culpable negligence, you voluntarily or through malice, omit one mortal sin in Confession, not only you do not obtain the remission of the sins which you have declared, but you burden your soul with a new mortal sin, and you must repeat the whole Confession, and add to it the avowal of the sacrilege which you have perpetrated.

To make a good Confession,—you must then accuse yourselves of your sins with frankness, candor and sincerity,—you must declare with sorrow all the mortal sins of which you are guilty, without reserve,—without exception.

In vain may one say that he is ashamed to declare all his sins; this pretext is null before God. You ought to be ashamed of sin, but, when it is a question of obtaining the pardon of sin, you must be above all shame,—you must go and accuse yourself to the priest. It is a humiliation which God imposes upon the sinner,—it is the beginning of penance. But you have not courage, you tell me, to accuse yourself of this sin. Of what are you afraid? is it lest it may be divulged? certainly not, for you very well know that your confessor is forbidden, under the most terrible anathemas, ever to utter a word of what he knows only by Confession. You



can not find a single example of this crime;—a special Providence watches over the seal of Confession.

What then do you fear? That you might lose the esteem of your director, and destroy the good opinion which he had of you? Do not believe that the sins you have to declare are so great that your confessor never heard the like before;—on the contrary, be persuaded that far more grievous ones have been confessed to him. He is a physician, accustomed to see and examine the most loathsome sores; he treats with most gentleness those whose wounds are deepest; he loves them, and esteems them the more for their courage in revealing themselves, and showing forth plainly the sad state of their souls. He is a father, who has no words but those of consolation,—no tears but those of joy for the prodigal son whom grace brings back to him. Fear not then,—far from decreasing the good opinion your confessor has of you, your frankness, your sincerity, and the confidence you testify toward him, touch his heart, edify him, and place you far higher in his esteem and affection. But my sin is so shameful! “What,” cries out St. Augustine, “you were not ashamed to commit the sin, why then are you ashamed to declare it. It is the devil who inspires you with this shame, fearing lest his prey should escape him.” What do you hope to gain by concealing this sin? You can not deceive God,—He beholds it, no matter how deep you may bury it in your soul. You may succeed in deceiving the priest, so that he pronounces over you the words of absolution, but God ratifies them not in heaven. What then do you hope for? That later you may have more courage? The longer you defer, the more obstacles will you have to surmount, and the more your shame will increase. You are abusing grace: your heart will become more and more hardened, because of your infidelity, and the sacrileges which you commit by receiving the sacraments in the state of mortal sin. Thus you will go on heaping sacrilege upon sacrilege—you will reach your last sickness, and on your bed of death you will still be ashamed to declare your sin, and will not tell it. The priest will ask you, is there any thing more to be told? and you will answer: *No!* Fatal word,—which sets the seal on your reprobation, and plunges your soul into eternal flames! Terrible word; I hear it reëchoing along the infernal vaults, and see how it rejoices hell. Miserable man that you are, you were

not willing to declare this sin and save your soul, and now God is about to manifest it before the world. For all eternity you shall see this sin,—it will be seen, engraved on your heart in the midst of the fires which shall eternally devour you.

O my God! cast a look of compassion on those who hear me, touch their hearts, fill them with compunction, with sincerity and with courage;—bring them contrite and humbled to the tribunal of peace and reconciliation, that there a sincere Confession of their sins may snatch them from the hands of the demon, may place them on the right of your divine Son, and render them happy forever.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXXIV.

### ON SATISFACTION OR PENANCE.

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“Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance.”—ST. LUKE, iii: 8.

SATISFACTION is the reparation of the injury which has been offered to God by sin. Considered as a part of the Sacrament of Penance, it consists in the works which the priest enjoins upon the penitent to repair the injury done to God and to serve as a preservative against relapse. To obtain the remission of your sins, in the Sacrament of Penance, you must join to contrition and confession, the will to perform the penance or satisfaction which your confessor shall see proper to impose. However, if you neglect to fulfill it, though this would be a sin, nevertheless, the effects of absolution still subsist. I say that it is a sin not to perform the penance imposed by the priest, because, it is depriving the sacrament of its integral part, it is neglecting the reparation which God demands. But does God require no satisfaction but that which His minister imposes? He also wishes that the sinner would do true penance during his whole life. To teach you how you can easily perform this penance is the end I propose to myself in this instruction.

Jesus Christ, His Apostles, His Church and the tradition of all

ages tell us that there are but two ways to attain heaven, namely : the way of *innocence* and the way of *penance*. Alas ! how few there are who preserve the precious treasure of innocence, wherewith they were enriched at their baptism ! It was to us then that our divine Saviour addressed himself when he said : “Unless you do penance, you shall all perish.” But will it be sufficient to satisfy God, if we confine ourselves to the avowal of our guilt and cease to live in sin ? “No,” says St. Gregory, “the mouth that has vomited forth blasphemies does not repair them by silence. No man pays his debts by merely ceasing to contract new ones.” Thus, sins are not expiated,—are not repaired by simply ceasing to commit them anew.

What ! has not our divine Saviour satisfied for mankind by dying on the cross ? Yes, my Brethren ; but to profit us, the merits of the Man-God must be applied to us, and they are so only in so far as it pleases God, and in the manner and on the conditions which He has a right to demand. In Baptism the application of the merits of the cross is complete ; every thing is done there, in some manner at the expense of the Saviour, and our sin is entirely and immediately blotted out. But it is not so with the Sacrament of Penance. God desires exceedingly to snatch you from the jaws of hell ; but, because you have broken the first alliance, you must be punished ; your sin is forgiven and the eternal torments due to it remitted, but there still remains a temporal punishment which you must suffer, either in this life, or in purgatory ; there still remains the obligation of satisfying the justice of God.

To satisfy God and discharge the debt contracted by sin, we must take up our cross, walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and follow Him along the road of sufferings ; we must, in a word, do penance by fasting, alms and prayer. Nevertheless, let this not alarm our weakness : I can assure you that penance is practicable in every state of life ; that we can very easily make atonement for our sins, and at a very small cost.—But do you not say that penance must be made by fasting, alms-deeds and prayer ? I do, my Brethren, but it is a kind of fasting which the most delicate, nay, even sick persons can easily practice ; it is a kind of prayer which every one can adopt, and a species of alms which comes within the reach of the poorest man.

You can not fast,—your feeble and delicate health forbids it,—



the toilsome life you lead will not permit it. Do we fast only when we abstain from eating meat and lessen the quantity of our meals? No, my Brethren, you also fast when you deprive yourselves of those things which flatter your self-love, your sensuality, your passions and your evil inclinations. You practice a fast most agreeable to God, when, through a spirit of penance and mortification, you deprive yourselves of any thing which, without being prohibited or bad in itself, still would afford you some pleasure. For instance, a young man delights in the society of some friends. If he deny himself this pleasure through a motive of love for God; if, instead of visiting those friends on Sunday, he goes to the church and assists at High Mass and Vespers, oh, he practices a fast most precious in the sight of the Lord,—a most meritorious fast. A new fashion springs up, and this young girl wishes to adopt it; her parents permit her, and even furnish her with means to gratify her wish; but through a motive of mortification she denies herself this gratification: oh, this privation is also a fast most pleasing to God and most meritorious. A man does you an injury: it is in your power to revenge the wrong,—to render evil for evil; but you forgive,—you refuse to seek satisfaction for the wrong which has been done you; here again is an acceptable and most meritorious fast. You, poor laborers,—who toil so hard from year's end to year's end, if through the spirit of mortification and love of God, you bear your trials and toils; if you offer to God the sweat of your brow, your privations and sufferings; if you unite them to the sufferings and sorrows of your Saviour, you practice a fast most pleasing to God and most meritorious! You desire to increase your wealth and leave your children a fortune, but all your enterprises are unsuccessful; beside, sickness and adversity come upon you; the desire springs up in your heart to see this cross removed, and your sufferings ended; repress this desire, struggle against your impatience, accept the penance which the Lord, in His goodness imposes, and this shall be a most salutary and most meritorious fast! “For our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.”\*

You understand now, my Brethren, that there is a way of fasting

which all of us can adopt and put in practice. Let us see if it be more difficult for us to pray. Do we pray only when by words we praise the Lord, implore His assistance or thank Him for His mercies? No, my Brethren; prayer is simply the elevation of the soul to God: we pray then when we refer to God whatever happens us;—we pray when we humble ourselves in submission to His holy will,—when we receive with patience and resignation our crosses, because they are sent by Him; we pray when we perform our daily labor for his honor, following the advice of St. Paul: “and whatever we eat or drink or whatever else we do, we do all for the glory of God.” And where is the man who can not pray thus, many times in the day, even in the midst of the most toilsome work? Where is the man who can not discharge the duties of his state in submission to the will of God, and resting on the merits of Jesus Christ, offer them to God from the bottom of his heart? Where is the mother, who, without neglecting her household duties, may not often, during the day, elevate her soul and heart to her heavenly Father, and consecrate to Him the work of her hands? Where is the servant or working man, who can not perform the duties of his station through love of God, and bear, by offering it to God in the spirit of penance, the heat and burden of the day? Ah! if he did, he would pray, and pray well. Adopt then the beautiful custom of elevating your souls to God every morning; consecrate to Him, from the first moment you rise, your work, your duties and your trials; sometimes, during the day, renew in your hearts this good intention, and, be assured, you will have prayed well, and performed a most salutary penance.

But the Holy Ghost says to us: “Redeem your sins by alms.” Can you do so, my Brethren? Yes, you who are rich can, and, if you fail in doing so, you are avaricious,—you are guilty of sin in the eyes of God, and your sins shall not be forgiven, for God pardons not the wicked Dives. But does this obligation of redeeming their sins by alms concern only the rich? No! It binds all, for all of us can fulfill it.

Alms-deeds consists not only in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and distributing money to the needy; it is also an act of charity, agreeable to God and most profitable to your soul, to render a kind service to your neighbor, to assist him either corpor-

ally or spiritually, whenever he stands in need of your assistance. You bestow alms when you visit the sick, console the afflicted, instruct the ignorant, or when by your good example and charitable counsel, you seek to correct the vicious, and bring back to virtue those who are going astray. How many occasions present themselves for the exercise of these kind offices! God furnishes you with many such opportunities every day, and the truly charitable heart knows well how to make use of them. The father of a large, helpless family may not be able to give pecuniary aid to his poor neighbor, whom misfortune has reduced to want; but he can give him good advice, he can console him in his miseries, and perhaps be instrumental in procuring him assistance from other persons more favored with the good things of this world. All of us can sometimes do good to our neighbor. A laboring man may not be in a condition to give money to the suffering poor, but he can at least bestow upon them his care,—he can assist them by working for them, by watching them when they are sick, and in many other ways lend them a helping hand: he can give good example to his companions and contribute to their edification and salvation; he can pray for the unfortunate and recommend them to others who have it in their power to aid and relieve them. Was I not right then in telling you, my Brethren, that penance is easy? We may perform it at every step we take. How blind then must be the sinner who does not profit by so favorable an opportunity of paying off the debts which he owes to the divine Justice! It is easy to fast, easy to pray, easy to give alms. If we wish, all our pains, all our toils, all our works, all our tribulations may serve us as penance and satisfaction to God. But you must observe, my dear Brethren, that, to expiate our sins by this means, we must suffer all and accept all with patience and resignation; we must offer all and unite all to the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; we must keep ourselves in the state of grace, or at least in a sincere desire of placing ourselves in that state as soon as possible by a good confession. Adopting this precaution, we can lead a life common indeed in appearance, but in reality a holy life, one which will satisfy God, expiate our sins, preserve us from the sufferings and pains of purgatory, unite us to the train of our divine Lord, and conduct us to the happiness of heaven.—AMEN.



## SERMON LXXXV.

ON INDULGENCES.

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“Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”—ST. MATTHEW, xviii: 18.

THE Sacrament of Penance effaces the sins committed after baptism, and purifies the soul from its stains; it also remits the eternal punishment, but not always the temporal punishment due to sin, leaving to the sinner the obligation of expiating his crimes by proportionate satisfaction. Must we suffer this temporal punishment in all its rigor and in all its extent? No, my Brethren; the Church, in her truly maternal tenderness, comes to our assistance and delivers us from the burden of the punishment which we should otherwise have to undergo, either in this world or in purgatory; she furnishes us with means of paying off the debts we have contracted toward God, and this means she offers us in what are called *Indulgences*. A brief explanation of these will form the subject-matter of our instruction to-day.

What is an Indulgence? An Indulgence may be defined the remission of the whole or a part of the temporal punishment, which is due to the justice of God after the sin and eternal punishment have been remitted. This remission is granted out of the tribunal of penance, by the application of the sacred treasure of graces of which the Church is the depository and dispensatrix. An Indulgence does not remit sin, not even venial sin, nor the eternal punishment due to sin; it can only affect the punishment to be suffered in this world or in purgatory. Indulgences are of two kinds, *partial* and *plenary*. A partial Indulgence, as of forty days, of a hundred days, of seven years, is that which remits a part of the punishment due to sin. But you must not suppose that an indulgence of forty days or of seven years, obtains for him who gains it a liberation of forty days or of seven years from purgatory; it refers to the

penance which was prescribed by the ancient canons. In the early ages of Christianity, public penances, which sometimes lasted for many years, were imposed for certain sins. Sinners had to pray much, to pass their days in mourning and their nights in watching and weeping, to sleep on the ground in sackcloth and ashes, to clothe themselves with hair shirts, to fast, to give alms, and perform many other good works. This ancient discipline is no longer in force; still the justice of God is always the same, and sin deserves no less punishment to-day than it did in those early ages. We commit many sins; to expiate them we should do penance for many years, perhaps our whole life would not be sufficient. But the Church, ever animated and conducted by the Spirit of God, grants us Indulgences. At one time she remits a hundred days, seven years, or fifty years of penance which would have been imposed upon us according to the ancient regulations; and consequently, the corresponding punishment which we would have to undergo in purgatory. At another time she opens still more generously the treasure confided to her maternal tenderness, and remits all the penance which we would have to perform, all the punishment which we would have to suffer in expiation of our sins, after the eternal guilt had been forgiven; such is the effect of a *plenary Indulgence*. The penitent who gains the whole of a plenary Indulgence is as pure and spotless before God as if he had but that instant been regenerated in Jesus Christ by Baptism. The Church has forgiven him all,—she has completely freed him from his bonds, by virtue of the supreme power which our divine Saviour gave to Peter, when He said to him: “Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”\*

What then! must we not atone for our sins? Must we not satisfy the divine Justice in some way? My Brethren, God could demand of us all that we owe Him, even to the last farthing; but His infinite mercy permits the innocent to pay for the guilty, and that the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ and His saints should turn to our profit and diminish our obligations and our debts. It is with the superabundant merits of the blessed Virgin and the saints, it is above all, with the infinite merits of

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\* St. Matthew, xvi : 19.

Jesus Christ, that the Church pays the debt which her children owe to divine Justice. This is the source whence she draws the graces which she grants them, the Indulgences which she distributes to them. The satisfaction which our divine Saviour presented to His Father, was of inexhaustible merit,—and “where sin abounded, grace hath abounded more.”\* One drop of His divine blood could have redeemed a thousand worlds, saved them from hell and reconciled them to God; and yet all our Redeemer’s blood was shed,—not a drop of it remained in His veins! Jesus has therefore suffered infinitely more than was necessary for our redemption. And what has become of these superabundant satisfactions and merits? He himself has placed them in the treasury of His Church, that she might apply them to us under the name of *Indulgences*.

There has been and there is still on earth a countless number of holy servants of God, who have offered far more satisfaction for their faults to God than He required of them. Compute, if you can, the merits and satisfactions of the numberless holy martyrs, confessors and virgins, who, during so many ages have done such great things for God,—and add to this the merits and satisfactions of the multitude of living servants of God, who have always served Him with admirable fidelity, yet who lead such mortified, penitent lives. Compute, if you can, the merits and satisfactions of a John the Baptist, sanctified in his mother’s womb; the satisfactions and innumerable merits of the holy Mother of God, of Mary, the Queen of martyrs, of confessors and of Virgins, who never committed the slightest fault, who suffered so much, and who, every hour, every moment, at every throb of her heart, brought forth works so agreeable to God, so rich in satisfactions? Well then, my Brethren, are all these satisfactions lost? No. The Church is the mother of all the saints; she therefore lawfully inherits the rich treasure of their merits, the keys of which she confides to the hands of the sovereign pontiff and of bishops, that they may draw from it the spiritual goods which they impart to us under the name of Indulgences. It is then the satisfactions of Jesus Christ and the saints that place us in the happy possibility of satisfying God and expiating our sins. The Church, our kind mother, acts in favor of

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\* Romans, v: 20.



those who can only with difficulty atone for their sins in this world, like a good and charitable father, who, seeing some of his children overwhelmed with debts, gives them the money which his other children had transferred to him, to dispose of as he judged fit.

It is true, *Indulgences* free us from years,—from ages of suffering; but is it the intention of the Church to release us from penance? No, but to assist us in performing it; therefore she grants *Indulgences* only to sinners who do every thing in their power to appease the divine justice; she wishes to supply for their inability, and not to encourage their negligence. “The Church,” says St. Cyprian, “can use her clemency only in favor of true penitents, who sincerely endeavor to satisfy for their sins, and humbly beg the *Indulgences* of the Church; such alone can be benefited by the recommendation of the martyrs and the *Indulgence* of the priests.”

To gain an *Indulgence*, it is therefore necessary to be in the state of grace, free from all mortal sin. While sin reigns in your heart, pardon can not enter it. It is absolutely necessary then that a sincere confession, accompanied with true repentance, reestablish your soul in the grace and friendship of God; for an *Indulgence* can not be applied to such as remain His enemies. A plenary *Indulgence* remits all the temporal punishment which our sins had merited for us, and which we would have had to suffer either in this world or the next. Surely this is a great blessing; but to obtain it, is it sufficient to make a good confession? A plenary *Indulgence* will efface all the temporal punishment still due to mortal sin when the eternal guilt has been remitted by the Sacrament of Penance; it will produce the same effect with regard to the punishment which you deserved for venial sins, of which you repent; but, if there be any venial faults for which you are not sorry, they are not pardoned, and they are not susceptible of an *Indulgence*; so that, in this case, the *Indulgence* would not be plenary in its application. There are few who gain a plenary *Indulgence*, because there are few who detest all their venial sins. To gain an *Indulgence*, it is necessary that he who performs the work to which it is attached, should have the intention of gaining it. It is therefore good for the faithful to renew every morning the intention of gaining all the *Indulgences* attached to the practices of piety which they may per-

form during the day. And here let me remark the great favor which the Church grants to the faithful who are in the habit of confessing their sins every week. She permits them, without making a new confession, to gain all the Indulgences which occur during the week, provided they can not reproach themselves with any grievous faults when these Indulgences are applied. Finally, to gain an Indulgence, we must perform exactly whatever is prescribed by the bull or brief granting the Indulgence, and we must perform it as it is prescribed; to all this we must join a true desire to satisfy God for our sins,—we must keep our hearts in a religious and penitent spirit.

Endeavor to gain as many Indulgences as you can, that you may participate in the merits and satisfactions of Jesus Christ and His saints, that you may supply for your own weakness, and that you may shorten the punishment which would retard your eternal happiness. It would be more perfect still to gain Indulgences through a pure desire for the glory of God, that He may be glorified in the remission of your sins and of the punishment due to them. Would we not esteem as foolish the man, who, loaded with debts, would nevertheless, refuse to take advantage of all just means in his power to release himself from them? And how can we consider ourselves wise, if we neglect to pay the debts which we owe to God, while we can discharge them so easily? There are Indulgences attached to the greater portion of the pious works which we perform, and of the prayers which we say every day; let us therefore put ourselves in a condition to gain them, if we wish to spare ourselves the intolerable pains of purgatory, and be the sooner admitted into the possession of eternal happiness,—a blessing I wish you all.—AMEN.

## SERMON LXXXVI.

### ON EXTREME UNCTION.

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“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.”—ST. JAMES, v: 14, 15.

BAPTISM elevates us to the sublime dignity of children of God and of His Church, makes us members of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost. In Confirmation, this Divine Spirit descends upon us with the plenitude and magnificence of His gifts. The holy Eucharist makes us so many sanctuaries in which Jesus Christ condescends to dwell. Penance restores us to our former dignity, when sin has deprived us of it. Such are the means of salvation which the mercy of God has prepared for the course of our lives. But we must all one day die; and when that hour is about to strike, religion, which purified man at his entrance into life, comes to sanctify him at his departure out of this world, by offering him the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, which is, as it were, the baptism of the new life which we receive at death. It is of this liberating sacrament that I mean to speak to you to-day.

What is Extreme Unction? Extreme Unction is a sacrament instituted for the spiritual and corporal comfort of sick persons. This sacrament is called Extreme Unction, because it is the last unction which the Christian receives. The first unction is made in Baptism, the second in Confirmation, and the last when he is dangerously ill. Though this word *Extreme* does not signify an extremity without hope, but the last unction which the Saviour instituted for the sanctification of men, yet it is not given in all kinds of sickness, but solely when a person is perceived to be in danger of death. The catechism of the Council of Trent, speaking



of this sacrament, says : "It is a very grievous sin to defer the holy Unction until, all hope of recovery now lost, life begins to ebb, and the sick person is fast verging into a state of insensibility. It is obvious that, if administered while the mental faculties are yet unimpaired, while reason still exercises her dominion, and the mind is still capable of eliciting acts of faith and of directing the will to sentiments of piety, the sacrament must contribute to a more abundant participation of the graces which it imparts."

When was it that our divine Saviour instituted this sacrament? It is generally believed that He instituted Extreme Unction, immediately after the Sacrament of Penance, and a little while before His Ascension. However this may be, the Apostle St. James has made known to us the institution of this sacrament, when he said : "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord : And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man : and the Lord shall raise him up : and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Obedient to this precept, the Church, since her establishment in the world, has never ceased to make use of this sacrament.

According to the words of the Apostle, two things are essential to Extreme Unction, and constitute its matter and form ; these are the unction and the prayer which accompanies it. The unction or anointing is made with oil of olives, which the bishop consecrates on Holy Thursday. The holy oil is applied to each of the principal members of the sick person, to purify them from the sins of which they have been the organs and the instruments. While anointing, the priest pronounces this prayer : "May the Lord by this unction, and by His most tender mercy, forgive you whatever evil you have done by your sight, by your smell, and by your other senses." How powerful and efficacious is this prayer, since the Lord has promised that He will always hear it ! We ought therefore to return the most lively thanks to the goodness of our divine Saviour, who has bestowed upon us this precious gift ! But, alas ! how few are there who testify by their conduct a proper esteem and respect for this august sacrament ! On the contrary, many Christians seem to dread the idea of receiving it, when the minister of Jesus Christ deems it necessary to administer it to them. And why ? Simply

because they are ignorant of the salutary effects which this sacrament produces.

Among these effects, there is one of great value, and of which St. James speaks. He hesitates not to assert that this sacrament blots out sins. If the sick man "be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." Yes, Extreme Unction remits venial sins; but does it also efface mortal sins? Listen attentively to what I am about to say, and give thanks for it to the infinite goodness of God. Without doubt, the Sacrament of Penance is, after Baptism, the source whence God requires that we should seek the remission of our sins and the grace of reconciliation; for this reason, this sacrament, when it can be received, should precede Extreme Unction: yet, it may happen that a person, after having received absolution and communion, falls into a mortal sin, of which he is not aware, and which he consequently will not confess; it is possible that he may have received absolution and communion in a bad state, and yet be ignorant of it: in this case, if he receive Extreme Unction with a sincere sorrow for his sins, and if he place no obstacle in the way of this sacrament, he receives the remission of his faults as an effect proper to Extreme Unction, which has been instituted for this end by our bountiful Saviour. Hence this sacrament is called by the holy fathers the supplement and complement of penance.

Extreme Unction effaces the residue of sin. But what do you understand by the residue of sin? It is the temporal punishment which the sinner has to undergo in this world or in the next, in expiation of his mortal sins already pardoned, and of his other lighter faults. Extreme Unction delivers the sick person from them, but in proportion to the dispositions with which this sacrament is received. The residue of sin is also a certain sluggishness, a kind of disrelish for good,—a want of application and fervor for the things of God,—a certain languor, which results from the disease of the soul; Extreme Unction cures us of all these and blots out whatever may be sinful in them.

Another effect which Extreme Unction produces, is, that it gives us the grace of consolation, causes abundant blessings to descend into our hearts, strengthens us to die well, some with joy, others in tranquillity and peace, or, at least, without trouble and discouragement. It clothes the sick person with an invincible power to

overcome the tempter ; it imparts to the soul of the dying the hope of eternal rewards ; it strips death of its terrors and transforms it into an angel of heaven, summoning us from the miseries of this world and transplanting us into the abodes of ineffable delights. Listen to those beautiful words of the Council of Trent : “ At the same time that the external unction is applied to the afflicted members of the sick man, the interior unction of the Holy Ghost is infused into his soul, comforting him, consoling him, and giving him strength to bear the rigors of his sickness, by exciting in him a great hope and confidence in the divine mercies.” Whence, in fact, does it come, that this fond husband, so soon to be torn from the wife whom he loves with the tenderest affection, bears his separation with such calmness and patience ? How is this good father able to give his last blessing to his dear children with so much resignation ? Where has that poor sinner, lately so tormented by the pains of remorse,—where has he found such peace and tranquillity that he seems to be replenished with consolations ? Oh ! the holy oil of Extreme Unction has fortified them, and enabled them to become thus triumphant in the combat against impatience, against the regret which might naturally arise from the breaking of the bonds which bind them to life, and against the terrors of death and its consequences. They are marked with the cross of Jesus Christ, the inexhaustible source of consolations and of graces : they feel and experience the truth of the promise made them by their blessed Lord, when He said : “ Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.” Yes, my Brethren, the ministers of the living God, who are so often called to the deathbeds of His servants, can assure you that Extreme Unction really produces in the souls of such as receive it worthily all these salutary effects and wonderful changes.

How greatly then are those Christians to be pitied, who fear this sacrament so much, that all kinds of artifices must be resorted to, to induce them to receive it ! Can we have recourse too soon to consolations so necessary in that state when the world is about to forsake us, and friends and relations are powerless to comfort us ? But perhaps you regard this sacrament as the forerunner of death. You are in error if you do. Our blessed Lord instituted it not to hasten your death, but to hasten your cure. If God judges that



the recovery of health will conduce to your salvation ; if the prolongation of your life will contribute to your own sanctification and the divine glory, the effect of the sacrament will certainly be to drive away your disease, and cure you. But, if you have recourse to this sacrament only when your life is despaired of, is it not a tempting of God to expect your cure from Him then ?

How good Thou art, O my God ! to show such mercy to us at the very time we are about to appear before Thy justice ! Permit not, O Lord, that we pass out of life without the benefit of this sacrament. We do not wish to neglect any of the graces which Thy paternal bounty has prepared for us, and we shall endeavor to merit, by a truly Christian life, the favor which we implore from Thy mercy. From this moment we conjure Thee to grant us at the hour of death, the spirit of faith, of prayer, of penance and of compunction which should accompany the reception of Extreme Unction. May Thy mercy pardon us all, O my God ! that Thy supreme justice may discover nothing to punish in our souls,—so that dying in Thy arms the death of the just, we may live eternally with Thee.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXXVII.

### HOLY ORDERS.

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“ Let a man so look upon us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.”—1 CORINTHIANS, iv : 1.

It was not sufficient for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to have regenerated man in Baptism, to have fortified and strengthened him in the faith by Confirmation, to feed him with the bread of angels in the holy Eucharist, to wash him from all the stains of sin in Penance, and to sanctify his departure out of this world by Extreme Unction. Our loving Lord wished to establish other sacraments, to sanctify the two principal states of the world, namely : the state of priesthood and that of matrimony. We have

yet to explain these two sacraments, and to-day I shall speak of the first of them,—Holy Orders.

What the prophets had long before announced, Christ came to accomplish. He came to found a new kingdom, to promulgate a new law, to institute a new sacrifice, and consequently, a new priesthood. Under the ancient law, the tribe of Levi alone was called by the Lord to exercise the functions of the priesthood, and to offer to God the sacrifices appointed by the Jewish religion. So, under the law of grace, it is not granted to all the faithful to be elevated to the dignity of the priesthood and to be invested with the powers necessary to exercise the sacred functions. According to the order established by our Saviour, those alone can offer sacrifice, who have received a special vocation from God, and who have been especially consecrated for these sublime functions by the reception of the Sacrament of Orders.

Holy Orders, therefore, is a sacrament which gives power and grace to exercise, in a holy manner, the ecclesiastical functions. These functions are important, holy and sublime; therefore, the Church requires that those who aspire to them should make a long previous preparation, should receive several minor Orders, and only reach by degrees the high dignity of the priesthood. The first step toward the sanctuary is the reception of *tonsure*. The prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, instituted this holy ceremony in memory of our blessed Lord's crown of thorns, that, what had served in the hands of the wicked as a humiliation and torment to Jesus Christ, might become for the Apostles a sign of honor and of glory. This tonsure, or shaving of the crown of the head, reminds the ministers of the Church, that having renounced the world, they belong henceforward specially to God, are consecrated to His service, and must henceforth live only for their divine Master.

Having received tonsure, the candidate for the ministry goes on step by step through the four minor Orders, until he reaches the Holy Orders, which consecrate him irrevocably to the service of the altar. He becomes a *sub-deacon*, that is to say, he is called to serve the deacon at the altar. If he be admitted to deaconship, he receives the power of serving, on solemn occasions, the priest during the celebration of the divine mysteries and of singing the Gospel. In fine, the deacon receives the third Holy Order, in which this

sacrament properly consists, and is made a priest of the Lord. It is the office of the priest to preside over the assemblies which are held in the Church to render to God the worship that is due to Him; it is the priest who consecrates the bread and wine and changes them into the body and blood of Jesus Christ; it is the priest who receives, by the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the power of judging consciences, of remitting or retaining sins, of administering most of the sacraments, of preaching the word of God to the faithful, of explaining to them the truths of religion and of blessing persons and things. If the priest be elevated to the dignity of the Episcopacy, he receives the plenitude of the priesthood. Bishops are, by divine right, superior to priests. The Holy Ghost has appointed them to govern the Church, and, as it belongs to them to ordain the inferior clergy, they have jurisdiction over them. All bishops are equal among themselves as to the power of Orders, which was given by Jesus Christ, at the same time, and in the same measure to the Apostles, whose successors the bishops are. But the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, has the primacy, not only of honor and precedence, but also of authority and jurisdiction over all the other bishops. All are subject to his keys, both pastors and flocks. Bishops are pastors with regard to the flocks confided to their care, but they are sheep with respect to the pope,—with respect to Peter.

Who can tell the dignity of the priesthood and the greatness of the priest? The first man was great, because God had appointed him king of the whole universe; Moses was great, when, by one word, he separated the waters of the sea. Josue was great, when he said to the sun: "Stay thy course!" and the sun stood still. But, my Brethren, there is one still greater,—there is a man, who, every day opens the gates of heaven, and addressing himself to the Son of the Eternal God, says to Him: "Descend from Thy throne, come, that I may place Thee where I wish, that I may give Thee to whom I please, that I may immolate Thee to Thy Father!" and He comes, this Omnipotent God comes to become incarnate in the hands of this man and to obey his voice. This man is the priest. He is truly all-powerful in heaven,—he is all-powerful on earth. A man has fallen into sin,—into the chains of Satan; what power can deliver him? Angels can not; the ever glorious Mary, Mother of



God and Queen of angels and of men, can pray for the unfortunate wretch, but she can not absolve him from his slightest fault. But the priest speaks, and his chains are broken ; he says : "I absolve thee," and his sins are blotted out forever. Thus, the priest, powerful as God himself, can, in an instant, snatch the sinner from hell, and render him worthy of heaven ; God himself is obliged to abide by the judgment of His minister, and to refuse or grant forgiveness according as the priest refuses or grants absolution, for Jesus Christ has said to priests : " Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."\* How great the power ; how exalted the dignity of the priest ! He is a man more than angelic, since his ministry truly elevates him above the angels ; he is a divine man, since a God obeys him. O venerable dignity ! I am not astonished to find at the Council of Nice, the master of the world, the great Emperor Constantine, unwilling to occupy any but the last place, one below the humblest priest in the assembly, and refusing to take his seat until he had obtained their permission. How profound then should be your respect for the priests of the Lord ! and what gratitude should you not testify toward them !

The good priest, by his prayers, by his instructions and by his charity, is your greatest benefactor.

In the contest for eternal life you have powerful enemies to contend with ; the Apostle tells you, that it is not against enemies of flesh and blood you have to struggle, but against the principalities of hell, and you are withal so weak ! Who then shall render you strong and give you the victory ? Every day, and many times every day, the prayer of the priest ascends to heaven, and returns loaded with graces for you, full of strength and succor. It is this prayer which infuses into your heart courage and energy, and puts to flight your enemies. Every day, numberless sins all over the world excite the anger of God. In His just wrath He would strike you for your share in them, if it were not that the priest offers to Him the adorable sacrifice of propitiation, the divine Victim, that appeases His anger and averts from your heads His eternal vengeance.

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\* St. Matthew, xviii : 18.

It is the priest who has destroyed the empire of error in this world ; to him Jesus Christ has given the commission to teach all truths to all nations ; from his lips we learn true science,—the science of salvation. What is man ? Whence does he come ? He knows not. Whither does he go ? He knows not. What road must he take ? What duties has he to fulfill ? What does he owe to God ? What is his destiny ? Man knows nothing of all these things. Is he then condemned to live in this dreadful state of uncertainty and doubt ? Yes, if religion come not with her divine light, to dispel the clouds of darkness that hang over his mind. But the priest is there ; as a faithful guide, he comes to take you by the hand from your very childhood ; to point out to you the road you have to travel ; to fill your minds and your hearts with the knowledge and love of truth ; to disclose to you heaven, and tell you that your destiny here, is to render yourselves worthy of a place in that house of your heavenly Father.

The priest loves you : he understands better than any one else those words of our Lord : “ love one another as I have loved you ; ” and, in his heart he preserves toward you the affectionate sentiments which filled the heart of the good Shepherd of our good Jesus, whose representative and vicar he is among you. You are ever present to his mind ; he rejoices with you ; he shares your sorrows, your disgrace and your miseries, and he endeavors, by every means at his command, to mitigate them ; he makes himself all to all, because he loves you all, and because he wishes to gain you all to Christ,—to make you all happy. Therefore, he makes himself the guide of childhood, to preserve its innocence ; the charitable censor of youth, the counselor of manhood, and the consoler of old age. This good pastor cordially loves his flock, he preaches to them, instructs them, exhorts them ; he is instant in season, and out of season, he reproves, entreats, rebukes with all patience and doctrine ; \* if he is sometimes severe, it is his fatherly care and love that makes him so ;—as for the rest, were it necessary, he would gladly lay down his life for his flock.

My Brethren, acknowledge the grandeur and dignity of the priest ; learn to appreciate the good that he is called on to perform among

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\* 2 Timothy, iv : 2.

you and the love which he bears you. Respect him as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, honor him as the minister of the thrice holy God, love him as a friend, as a brother, as a father. He prays for you, pray also for him, that he may be always a good, wise, prudent, and enlightened pastor, to guide you, and go with you to the sovereign Pastor of souls, to that happy land where joy everlasting reigneth.—AMEN.

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## SERMON LXXXVIII.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

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“This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church.”—

EPHESIANS, v : 32.

God himself instituted marriage, when, having created Adam and Eve, He said to them: “Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.” Adam received his companion from the hands of the Lord, and pronounced these mysterious words: “This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.”\* Marriage therefore, is a holy union, which God established in the world, and which Jesus Christ was pleased to elevate to the dignity of a sacrament. This is what the Council of Trent has decided in these words: “Matrimony, in the Evangelical law, is more excellent than the ancient marriages, on account of the grace which it confers through Jesus Christ; it is with reason therefore, that the holy fathers, the councils, and the universal tradition of the Church have, in every age, taught that it is rightly numbered among the sacraments of the new law.† Pay attention to me now, while I speak to you of this sacrament, which the Apostle calls *great*.

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\* Genesis, ii : 23, 24.

† Session 24.



Matrimony is a sacrament sanctifying the union of man and woman, and giving them grace to rear up their children in the love and fear of God. Many holy fathers think that this sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ when He assisted at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, where He blessed and sanctified not only the marriage which was there contracted, but marriage in general. However this may be, it is certain that the Apostle St. Paul reveals to us the institution of the Sacrament of Matrimony, when he calls it a "great sacrament in Jesus Christ and in the Church," that is, a sacred sign of the bond which unites Jesus Christ to the Church, His spouse.

Such, indeed, my Brethren, is the glorious privilege of Christian marriage, that it represents the union of the Saviour with His Church. As Jesus Christ, the only Son of the heavenly Father, descended from heaven to unite himself to the Church, so the husband leaves his father and mother to unite himself to his wife. The Church has been formed from Jesus Christ, dead on the cross: woman has been formed from man while he slept. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, the husband is the head of the wife. Jesus Christ protects, directs and conducts the Church to heaven; the husband must be the protector,—the guide of his wife; he must show her the road to heaven, but far more by his example than by his words. Jesus Christ and the Church constitute but one,—one and the same spirit animates them; man and woman are but one and the same flesh,—one and the same spirit ought to animate them. Jesus Christ tenderly loves His Church, but He loves her in view of her eternal happiness, and the Church, on her part, respects her divine Spouse, and preserves inviolable fidelity toward Him; in like manner, the husband should love his wife, but in view of her salvation; and the wife should respect her husband and preserve invincible fidelity to him. Jesus Christ is inseparably united to the Church; in like manner, the union which exists between the husband and the wife is indissoluble, one which death alone can sever.

It is thus, my Brethren, that our divine Saviour, by elevating marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, has made it the image and the sacred sign of a great mystery, of his intimate and eternal union with His Church, and He has been pleased that it should

become a source of spiritual blessings for those who receive it with Christian dispositions. It is a certain truth that those who marry after having consulted God, and with motives which God can approve, receive, by virtue of this sacrament, sanctifying grace, which greatly augments the sanctity of their souls, and along with this, numerous efficacious succors which help them to fulfill their holy duties, to live in piety and peace, to bear with patience the troubles of this life, and to rear up in a Christian-like manner, and in the practice of virtue, the children whom God may give them.

If, my Brethren, now-a-days there are many Christians, who, receiving this sacrament, do not experience these happy effects; if they live together in trouble and enmity; if they are troubled and impatient, in the midst of the cares and annoyances inseparable from marriage; if they find themselves unable to make their children wise and virtuous; if they neglect them, and abandon them to their evil inclinations; if, in a word, they render them miserable both for time and eternity, let them attribute this misfortune to themselves alone. Be satisfied that these evils have come upon them, because they entered the marriage state without having been called thereto by God; they have received this sacrament with bad dispositions; they have refused to coöperate with the divine grace, or have rendered themselves unworthy of it by actions which God condemns, and which sully the union that they have contracted at the foot of His altars.

Is marriage necessary? It is necessary to perpetuate the human race; it is necessary to give children to the Church and saints to heaven. Here you see the reason why our Lord raised this natural contract to the dignity of a sacrament. But all are not obliged to receive it. The Apostle St. Paul tells us that "he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doeth well; and he that giveth her not, doeth better."\* It is certain that our Lord elevated virginity above Matrimony; but all are not called to this perfection, and each one must follow his or her vocation.

The youthful Tobias said to Sara, his wife: "we are children of saints; and we must not be joined together like heathens

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\* 1 Corinthians, vii : 38.

that know not God.”\* You therefore who believe yourselves called to the marriage state, learn the ends for which the Lord established this sacrament among men.

When the Lord had created man to live in society, He said to him: “Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.” The Lord desired to prepare for himself adorers who would people successively earth and heaven; who, having one after the other glorified Him during their short pilgrimage in this world, might all together glorify him in the abode of immortality, for everlasting ages. This is the reason why we repeat to Christians about to enter into this holy alliance, those beautiful words which the angel of the Lord addressed to young Tobias: “Thou shalt take a virgin from the hands of her parents, with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham, thou mayest obtain a blessing in children. But when thou shalt take her, give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her; for they who, in such manner receive Matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.”†

Nevertheless, let those whom sad experience has proved that to live in celibacy, is for them an occasion of sin, not delay to seek, in an honorable and virtuous marriage, the means of preserving themselves against the sins of the flesh, and above all, an efficacious remedy against the dangers of their own concupiscence. It is not I, but the Apostle St. Paul, who clearly inculcates this: “I would that all men were even as myself: but every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn”‡ with the fires of concupiscence in this life and hereafter in the everlasting flames of hell.

Alas! my Brethren, how many unfortunate Christians now suffer and shall forever suffer the dreadful torments of hell, for not having complied with this advice of the Apostle! How many there

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\* Tobias, viii: 5.

† Tobias, vi.

‡ 1 Corinthians, vii: 8, 9.



are, who live in the constant habit of mortal sin, and every instant run the risk of being hurled into the eternal abyss, and who could live in the grace of God and work out their salvation, if they would only follow the voice of the Lord inviting them to enter into the sacred bonds of Matrimony! Marriage, therefore, has been instituted as a remedy against concupiscence.

"It is not good," says God, "for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself."\* Man and woman are united by the sacred bonds of Matrimony, and the Almighty wishes that this should be, for the purpose of mutually aiding one another, of supporting one another by their advice, their counsel and their mutual service; so that they may become every day more perfect and more holy. Hence, on the day of your marriage, we say to you: "Christians who unite in the sacred bonds of Matrimony, enter into a mutual promise of laboring in concert for each other's sanctification, of supporting patiently the pains of this life, that they may happily attain life everlasting; for marriage is a holy state, in which you promise to help one another, and lead holy lives in the Lord." This mutual assistance,—this bearing one another's burdens, is one of the most precious advantages of this union, and what ought to constitute its chief delight, if there be any delight in this world.

But how few are the Christians, who, at the time of their marriage, keep in view the sanctity of the state in which they are about to engage, and remember the ends for which the Lord instituted marriage! How few who marry for the purpose of giving children to the world, servants to God, and saints to heaven! How few who marry with the design of mutual edification, of mutually helping one another in the practice of virtue, of supporting and encouraging one another amid the troubles of life, amid the miseries and vexations of the world and the infirmities of old age!

What is it that induces most people to marry? Alas! but too often, it is passion that brings them to the altar; too often they have the most criminal objects in view in contracting an alliance which ought to be so holy and so pure! Levity, vanity, illusion occasioned by vain and ephemeral beauty, the desire of riches, ambition and

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\* Genesis, ii: 18.

cupidity, these are the motives which induce numberless Christians to enter into the sacred engagements of Matrimony. Others marry, and why? Because they are tired of leading a life of service; because they wish to become their own masters, they are impatient of paternal restraint; unbridled passion and sensual desires predominate over them. Is it to be wondered at then, if God refuses to bless such marriages? Is it to be wondered at, that such husbands and wives know only how to torment each other, and mutually contribute to each other's misery for time and eternity? To obtain the blessing of God and enjoy happiness in the holy state of Matrimony, you must enter into it with a good intention and for ends worthy of a Christian and of God. The conjugal union is a holy state, since Thou art its author, O my God! Thou knowest the dangers which beset Thy children, and the weakness of human nature; hence Thou hast annexed to the worthy reception of this sacrament peculiar graces, which enable the husband and the wife to surmount the various obstacles they may meet with in the way of happiness. Grant, O Lord, that those who are called to this state may render themselves worthy of the grace which Thou hast destined for them, and that they may prepare for it by a holy life. Give them grace to enter into all Thy views in their regard; give them an upright intention; purify them, sanctify them, so that they may deserve, when their earthly career will be over, to be admitted to the nuptials of the Lamb, and to enjoy for all eternity His ineffable presence in Thy own most holy mansion.—AMEN.

## PART VI.

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### SERMON LXXXIX.

#### ON SIN IN GENERAL.

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“Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent.”—ECCLESIASTICUS, **xxi**: **2**.

THE Son of God descended from heaven, led for thirty-three years a most austere and penitential life, shed His adorable blood, and died on a cross to destroy Sin. To prevent us from becoming guilty again, He promised us His aid and assistance; He opened among us seven abundant sources of blessings, and assured us “that whatever we shall ask of His heavenly Father in His name shall be given us.” Notwithstanding all this, the frightful monster Sin continues always waging war against the Lord, renewing the death of Jesus Christ, and destroying men by separating them from God. On every side iniquity seems to have inundated the earth. Never did men wander further from the maxims of a Christian life, which consists in avoiding evil and doing good. Following then the example of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, we are going to speak to you of this dreadful evil, which we call Sin, less indeed with a view of explaining its nature than with that of inspiring you with a horror for it.

What is Sin? St. Augustine says that Sin is any thought, word, deed or action contrary to the law of God; or, as St. Ambrose defines it: sin is a transgression of the divine commandments, a willful violation of the laws of the Lord.

An impious king, when oppressed with grief and sinking under the chastisements of divine justice, once said, “it is just and proper for man to be subject to the Lord.” The creature should daily offer



Him the homage of his obedience, and labor continually to accomplish His adorable will. Surely then, when this great God commands, all things are ready and eager to pay Him homage,—to obey His voice. Yet I am mistaken, it is not so. There is a being who wishes to rise from his state of dependance, a servant who longs to rebel against the authority of his master, a child who no longer acknowledges his father. A voice is heard exclaiming: I will not obey,—“I will not serve.”\* And who is this presumptuous being who dares to rise against a God so great,—to raise the standard of revolt against the omnipotent, eternal God? Is it man! Man, a vile compound of slimy clay,—man, a poor, weak, miserable being, whose span of life is but a day, and who is not master of even that! Such is the being who has the effrontery to vie with the Lord: behold, says St. Ambrose, nothingness taking up arms against the Supreme Being, to make himself equal to Him! See with what insolent pride he pronounces his blasphemies against the Lord. “Sovereign Master of the universe, thou hast imposed Thy law on all nature, and all nature obeys Thee; but I will not obey. Thou commandest me to honor Thy thrice holy name, to consecrate to Thy service certain days, to love my neighbor, to struggle against my passions; but I will not obey Thee. I will continue to outrage Thy name, I will desecrate the Sundays, I will hate my neighbor, I will detract and calumniate him, I will be the slave of my passions. It is true, Thou hast promised me everlasting felicity if I submit to Thy law; and Thou threatenest me with equal torments if I cast off the yoke of Thy authority; but I disregard Thy commandments, Thy promises and Thy threats. I will think what I wish, love what I wish, do what I wish, and live as I please.” The sinner therefore is a rebel against God.

And yet this man who thus offends his God is enriched with the benefits of his divine Master, and all covered with the august blood which has redeemed him. For him God created the world,—for him He sacrificed His own Son. What is still more dreadful, is, that this man makes use of the very benefits of God to insult Him. Mind, heart, imagination, soul, eyes, ears, tongue, feet, hands and body, he has received them all from God, and yet he makes use

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\* Jeremias, ii: 20.

of them to outrage God. The sinner therefore is an ungrateful wretch.

Sinner, you forsake the Lord, who is the fountain of living waters, and dig for yourself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.\* You abandon God, who is the principle of all good, to run after creatures, who are but vapors, shadows and empty phantoms. Where then is your faith, your reason and your good sense? You are then foolish as well as wicked.

You sin, that is to say, you sadden the heart of the best of fathers,—you force God to withdraw Himself from you,—you yield up your soul to the devil. Yes, you become the slave of the devil, for St. Peter says that such is the right of war, that he who is vanquished becomes the slave of the conqueror; now, it is the devil who conquers you; you are therefore the slave of the devil.

You sin, that is, you draw upon yourselves the hatred of God. But, you tell me, this is not so; for God loves all His works, and He hates none of the things which he Has made.† But God did not make Sin; Sin is the work of a will contrary to the will of God. God detests Sin; the love which He has for himself is the extent of the hatred which He bears to Sin; He pursues it therefore with an infinite, eternal hatred. Now, if God detests Sin with an eternal, necessary and infinite hatred, He detests the sinner in the same manner; that is to say, He can not avoid hating him as a sinner. In reality, the Holy Ghost informs us that “to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike.”‡ What a misfortune to be hated by God! Can there be any lot more sad, more miserable?

To be hated by God, while every day we stand in need of His graces and blessings! To be hated by God, while His love alone can open for us the gates of heaven! To be hated by God, our sovereign Judge, who can destroy our soul and body for all eternity, and bury us forever in the abyss of everlasting woes! Oh! no doubt, you hate and detest Sin,—you will fly from it,—you will never permit it to dwell in your hearts. “I have chosen the way of truth; we shall be wise, because the precepts of the law of the Lord shall always be before my eyes. Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. Give me understanding, and

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\* Jeremias, ii: 13.

† Wisdom, xi: 25

‡ Wisdom, xiv: 9.

I shall keep Thy law. Uphold me according to thy word, and I shall live. Help me, and I shall be saved.”\*

I have said that Sin is a violation of the law of God, but a *willful* violation. A person is not guilty of Sin when he is ignorant of the law and has no will to violate it, when there is neither advertence nor consent. For example, he is not guilty of Sin, who without malice, without advertence and without will, has had the misfortune to kill his neighbor. He is not guilty of Sin, who through involuntary forgetfulness or through ignorance, violates the law of the Church, by eating flesh meat on a day of abstinence, for there is in the heart of this man neither the will to offend God, nor the intention to violate His law, nor contempt of the commandments. Thus sick people and prisoners do not Sin when they fail to hear mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation; for they are lawfully prevented from complying with this duty. You suffer violent temptations in your mind, in your imagination or in your flesh; you are a prey to bad thoughts and evil desires; are you guilty of Sin? No, if they come in spite of yourselves, against your will, without any fault on your part. But you are guilty in your temptations, if you voluntarily and presumptuously expose yourselves to the occasions of Sin; as for example, if you were to visit a person with whom you would be tempted to commit Sin, or to keep bad company, if you were to read bad books or to live in idleness. When you thus expose yourselves to the danger, it is useless for you to say, I was unable to resist,—I was not free. You should not have exposed yourselves, or placed yourselves in a position wherein you could no longer be masters of yourselves. Thus, my Brethren, a man becomes guilty before God when he does things contrary to His law, and gives his consent directly or indirectly in the cause; that is to say, when he exposes himself to an occasion bad in itself, and when he perceives, at least in a confused way, the evils that may proximately result from such exposure. A man gets drunk; knowing by sad experience that he will commit in his drunkenness great crimes, he is responsible before God for all the Sins that he shall commit in that state, although at the time when he commits them he may be deprived of his reason; he is guilty

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\* Psalms, cxviii.



of the immodest words which he utters, of the oaths and blasphemies which he pronounces, of the insults and outrages which he perpetrates against his neighbor, of the injuries which he inflicts, and the scandal that he gives: all these things are voluntary in their cause, and are therefore sinful in the sight of the Lord.

Sin is a transgression of the law of God;—why do we not speak of human laws? Because every time that a man violates a just law, whether it be divine or human, he violates the law of God. The Apostle tells us “that all power comes from God;” and the Lord himself says, “it is by me that kings reign and establish just laws.” Whoever resists lawful authority, resists God himself,—resists the order which He has established. God has given to certain men the right to govern us; and to violate their laws, is to violate the law of God, and therefore, he who does so commits Sin.

The Empress Eudoxia, wishing to get rid of St. John Chrysostom, whose zeal and reproaches she dreaded, sent messengers from her court to sound him, and ascertain what he most feared. At first they threatened to deprive him of his temporal goods. You could not confer a greater favor on me, replied the holy bishop, than to relieve me of so heavy a burden.—You will be sent into exile.—Then it will be necessary for you to send me into some place where God is not; was the reply.—You will be condemned to prison and to death.—Very well! I am ready to suffer all these things. Tell the Empress that of all the things on earth I fear nothing but Sin. May heaven grant, my Brethren, that it may be so with you! However disagreeable the troubles of earth may be, fear them not; they are as nothing when compared to Sin. Fathers and mothers, teach this great truth to your children; tell them frequently how much God hates Sin, and how displeasing sinners are in His holy sight. As for ourselves, my Brethren, let us fly from Sin as from a most dangerous serpent. We have but too often, alas! provoked the wrath of God by our transgressions, let us endeavor, while we have time, to appease His anger by our repentance, that we may become children of mercy, and experience its salutary effects throughout a happy eternity.—AMEN.

## SERMON XC.

## ON SIN.—(CONTINUED.)

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“My son, take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.”—TOBIAS, iv: 6.

IN our last instruction, my Brethren, I endeavored to make you understand what Sin is in general. I told you that Sin is a thought, word, or action contrary to the law of God; and, I trust, convinced you that it is an odious rebellion against the Lord, a black ingratitude, and a great folly. Very wise then was the advice which the holy man, Tobias, gave to his son, when he said to him: “My son, take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.” To-day, I mean to speak to you of the different kinds of Sin.

How many kinds of Sin are there? There are two, original and actual. This word *original* implies that it comes from our origin. Original Sin is that which our first father, Adam, our *origin*, committed in the earthly paradise, and in which all of us have participated, because our wills were included, as it were, in that of Adam. If Adam had continued faithful to the commandment which God had imposed upon him, if he had not sinned, like him, all of us would have had the happiness of being born in sanctity and justice, and we would have partaken of all the advantages and privileges which the Lord had gratuitously and so generously granted to him. The King of kings said to him: “you shall be happy and immortal, you and your posterity, but on condition that you prove your submission by remaining faithful to the easy commandment which I impose upon you.” But Adam fulfilled not the condition, he disobeyed God, he fell away from grace,—he lost it, and we shared in his misfortune. We were conceived in iniquity,—our mothers brought us forth in Sin, and, had not the holy waters of Baptism

washed and purified our souls, we could never be admitted to see and love God in heaven. Let us not murmur; has an earthen vessel the right to ask of the potter why it has not been formed more magnificently and beautifully? Let us rather repeat these words of the Apostle: "O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"\* Who can fathom the views of God and enter into His impenetrable counsels? Adam sinned many thousand years ago, and we were born guilty in consequence of Adam's Sin; this is a mystery which we can not fathom. But, enveloped in obscurity as this dogma is, still it is not opposed to reason; our finite reason, indeed, can not grasp it, for it is above human comprehension, but, nevertheless, we must believe it since God has revealed it. For, has He not, essential truth and justice as He is, told us by the mouth of St. Paul, that we were born children of wrath, that "by one man Sin entered into this world, and by Sin death: and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."† We have sinned in Adam and we must undergo the chastisement due to our Sin: the privation of grace, the pains and miseries of life, death, ignorance and concupiscence which abides in us, even after we have been restored to the divine favor; these are what remains to us from the fall of our first father,—they are the sad consequences of our Sin. This condemnation exists,—it is just; we must believe these two truths, though we can not comprehend them.

Happy for us, my Brethren, that the Lord has not punished us as He punished the rebel angels, whom He condemned to eternal torments! The God of goodness loved us so much, that He was pleased superabundantly to repair the evil which our first parents had brought upon us; and now, where Sin had abounded, grace superabounds in generous profusion. We were dead in Adam, and we have risen to life with Christ, and by Jesus Christ in God, we have been delivered from our slavery; we have become just, holy, children of God, heirs of God, co-heirs of Jesus Christ, members of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost. And all these precious gifts,—all these divine blessings became our happy portion,

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\* Romans, xi: 33.

† Romans, v: 12.



when the holy waters of Baptism were poured upon our heads; this is the heavenly dew that blots out our Sin, which restores us to the grace and friendship of God, and reopens for us the gates of heaven. Christian parents, take heed and never permit your children to remain long in original Sin; they may die in that state, it needs not much to extinguish the weak breath of life which animates them. Hasten then to have them baptized, that the eye of God may discover nothing sinful in their souls, and that nothing may hinder them from entering heaven, if the Lord judge proper to shorten their days and call them to himself.

Original Sin, this sad inheritance which our first parents left us, is the source of all the other Sins which we commit, and which we call *actual*. This word *actual* is derived from the word *action*. *Actual* Sin is so called, because we commit it by our own action and by the free choice of our own will; it can not be committed until we have attained the age of reason and know what we do. Alas! but too soon do we acquire this unhappy power, and it is but too true, that the human mind, and all the thoughts of our hearts are inclined to evil from our very youth.

The Holy Ghost tells us, that we are all guilty of many Sins. In truth, innumerable are the Sins committed in the world, by thought, word, deed and omission. We Sin by thought, when we think evil, or of doing evil, voluntarily and with pleasure. God, who is the sovereign Master of our souls as well as of our bodies, prohibits, not only bad actions, but also bad thoughts and desires. His law not only stays the hand and the tongue, it also governs the mind and the heart. In the heart disobedience begins,—the heart is the source of Sin; words and actions are but its outward manifestations. So, it is certain that the soul that gives itself up to bad thoughts and evil desires, becomes as guilty before God as if it committed the actions which its thoughts represent to it: before the supreme Judge the will is reputed as the deed. It was to teach us the danger we run by opening our minds to bad thoughts, that our divine Saviour said to us: “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.”\*

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\* St. Matthew, v: 28.

Sin is committed by *word*, when any thing is said contrary to the honor of God, to truth or to fraternal charity. You therefore Sin by words, when you take unnecessary or false oaths, when you swear and blaspheme, when you tell lies, when you detract or calumniate, when you sing immodest songs or hold wicked conversations. These are the Sins of the tongue; Sins so numerous and so fatal to our souls, to the peace and happiness of mankind, that the Apostle St. James tells us that the tongue is a world of iniquity, and that it defileth the whole body.

A man Sins by *action*, when he commits deeds forbidden by the law of God, such as stealing, striking his neighbor, engaging in unjust lawsuits, committing shameful or dishonorable acts, or giving himself up to drunkenness.

Finally, a person Sins by *omission*, when he does not perform what his duty requires of him and what the law commands. If he sins who presumes to do what God prohibits, in like manner does he sin and offend the Lord who will not fulfill what God commands.

Nevertheless, how little regard men pay to Sins of *omission*! Are there many heads of families, who consider themselves guilty for not keeping to their duty those under their charge? For not watching over, reprimanding and correcting them? Are there many fathers and mothers, who accuse themselves in confession, of having neglected their children and taken little care to give them a Christian education? Are there many children, workmen and servants, who accuse themselves of having neglected their work and given too much of their time to idleness and foolish talk? In fine, are there many Christians, who accuse themselves of not having loved God sufficiently, of not having returned Him thanks for His benefits, of not having sincerely and in deed manifested love to their neighbors, of not having helped and relieved as many of their poorer fellow-creatures as they were able? Alas! my Brethren, it is but too true, that we commit a great number of Sins of omission; but we do not think of them, we do not believe ourselves guilty, and consequently we do not accuse ourselves of them in confession. Nevertheless, our blessed Lord, the Eternal Truth, assures us, that he who has known the will of his master and has not fulfilled it, shall be surely punished.

You see then, my Brethren, in how many ways we may unhappily

exercise the sad power which we possess of being able to offend God. All the powers of our body and of our soul are instruments of Sin and eternal ruin, if we do not keep a careful guard over them. Alas! if we sin,—if we are lost, it is truly our own fault, and because we are so malicious as to turn against our sovereign Benefactor the gifts which He has deigned to bestow upon us.

O my God! let me rather die than offend Thee again! True, I am weak! Many times have I experienced the inconstancy of my heart! But, Lord, I can do all things, if Thy grace supports me; grant me this grace, that I may watch over all my thoughts, words and actions, that they may never be opposed to Thy holy law. Strengthen, O Lord, the resolution which I take in Thy presence, for Thou alone canst enable me to execute it. Preserve the work of Thy hands; and never permit that the violence of my passions and the seduction of bad example should cause me to violate Thy holy law, or weaken the sincere purpose I this day form, of obeying, loving and serving Thee to the last moment of my life.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XCI.

### ON MORTAL SIN.

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“Know thou, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God.”—JEREMIAS, ii: 19.

WE know that there are innumerable sins committed in the world by thought, word, action and omission. These sins are of two kinds, mortal and venial. To-day, I shall speak of Mortal Sin, and you will be still more convinced of the wisdom of that advice which holy Tobias gave his son when he said to him: “My son, take heed that thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God;” you will also admit the truth of these words of the prophet Jeremias: “Know thou, and



see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God."

What is Mortal Sin? It is the sin committed by him who violates the law of God in a grievous matter, and with perfect consent, in other words, with reflection, deliberation and a full and entire will. This sin is called *mortal*, because it inflicts death on the soul. The true murderer of man is Mortal Sin, whose wages, says St. Paul, is death, not only the death of the body, introduced into this world by the sin of our first parents, but a death much more fearful,—the death of the soul,—for the Holy Ghost declares, "that the soul that sinneth shall die."\* But is not our soul immortal? Yes, my Brethren, faith and reason teach us that in its substance the soul is spiritual and immortal; but, if we consider it in its relations with God, the principle of all grace and glory, we must acknowledge that it can die. The possession of God constitutes its life; the privation of God its death. St. Augustine says, that "God is to the soul what the soul is to the body. When the soul is separated from the body, the body is but a mass of clay, which soon goes into dissolution; in like manner, when our soul loses its God, it is dead,—it is dead to grace, and its grave is in the pits of hell."

This soul, dead to grace, is stripped of all the favor which had been bestowed upon it, robbed of all the spiritual riches which it had acquired, and all its past merits are lost. Though a person had practised for eighty years all the austerities of the anchorites, had given all his goods to the poor, had accumulated as much merit as all the saints who ever lived or ever shall live in this world, yet, were he unfortunately to commit but one Mortal Sin and die without repentance, he would lose the fruits of all his merits, and receive not the lightest recompense for them for all eternity. "If the just man," says the Lord, "turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he had done, shall not be remembered: in the prevarication, by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin, which he hath committed, in them he shall die."\* The farmer, whose crops have been destroyed by the

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\* Joel, i.

† Ezechiel, xviii: 24.

hail-storm, the sailor whose vessel has been buried beneath the waves of the ocean, lament their misfortune ; their condition is a sad one, and no doubt deserves our compassion ; but the fate of the unfortunate soul that loses its merits, its heaven and its God, is infinitely more lamentable. It is true that, if the sinner have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, and obtain the pardon of his crimes, his merits revive ; but as long as he remains in the deplorable condition of sin, they are lost, and in that state he can never recover them. Nothing that you can do in the deplorable state of sin can ever merit for you an eternal reward. If you are in Mortal Sin, deprived of the grace of God, you are enemies of your Lord ; your souls defiled, degraded and profaned, are objects of abomination in His sight ; because, being sanctity itself, He necessarily detests iniquity wherever it is found. In that lamentable state, you are, as the prophet Isaias says, “full of the indignation of the Lord.”\* Practice every virtue, pray as much as you please, fast and give abundant alms ; your works are excellent in themselves, but they have no value before God,—they are not meritorious works. Why so ? Because sanctifying grace no longer abides in your hearts, and by it alone good works become precious in God’s sight, and worthy of being counted among the number of those works which give a right to the recompenses of the Lord.

Sinners, are then all your good works, no matter how praiseworthy, useless ? Yes, if you continue to love sin ; no, if you detest it, for then these good works aid you to appease the anger of God, and by a sincere repentance, you can obtain the happiness of being restored to the divine favor and friendship. You will hear His voice addressing you in the secret recesses of your hearts, how dreadful is the evil of sin, how bitter a thing it is to have forsaken the Lord your God, and how terrible to fall into the hands of the living God. Even in this life the lot of the sinner is bitter ; for, he who but awhile ago was the friend of God, the child of heaven, an heir to the eternal kingdom, sees himself, when he sins, become a poor exile, wounded to death, stripped of all his wealth, hated by God and a slave to the devil. But still more sad and terrible is the sinner’s lot in the life to come. Let us say it with the Gospel,

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\* Isaias, li : 20.

let us say it indeed with awe and trembling, but still let us say it, for it is necessary, useful, and an act of Christian charity to give warning of coming evils that they may be avoided,—let us then with the Gospel proclaim the awful truth, that hell with its eternal torments is the grave of souls whom Mortal Sin has killed. Whether they be rich or poor, learned or ignorant; whether their bodies repose in marble or lie buried beneath the green sward of earth, it matters not,—hell is the grave, the frightful sepulchre, the everlasting abode of every soul that passes out of life sullied by the stains of Mortal Sin: hell,—out of which there is no redemption,—which never restores what it has once received. Sin places you over this frightful precipice,—suspends you there by a single thread,—the frail thread of life; God, whom you have offended and whom you still continue to offend holds that thread in His hand; at any moment He may cut it, and bury you in this awful prison,—and once there, O sinners, its gates are closed against your release for ever!

But what emboldens you is, perhaps, that you have not committed a great many Mortal Sins; that you can not be placed among the number of those great sinners, whom the Apostle declares excluded from heaven, when he says: “no fornicators, nor unclean, nor covetous person, nor thieves, nor slanderers, nor calumniators, nor drunkards, nor gluttons, whose God is their belly and whose glory is their shame, shall ever possess the kingdom of Christ.” Do not deceive yourselves, my Brethren; not alone those who heap sin upon sin, shall become the prey of hell; every soul that departs out of this world in the state of Mortal Sin, though it had committed but one, and that one the least Mortal Sin, shall see his name blotted out from the book of life; heaven shall be closed against it, and it shall hear the terrible words of divine Justice: “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire.” Every Mortal Sin deprives us of the grace and friendship of God, of heaven and its ineffable delights. Alas! when grace is lost, all is lost. We become the enemies of God, the foes of the Almighty, who may in an instant immolate us to his just indignation, against which all men and all angels can not defend us! How then can we deliberately commit sin? And after having committed it, how can we rest one moment, without taking the proper means to rise from



the grave of sin? One single Mortal Sin is sufficient to cause our eternal misery! Think seriously of this.

Do you desire that I should adduce examples in support of this awful truth? The angels sin in heaven; a single sin, the sin of pride defiles them; God immediately drives them from His kingdom, and for them and for all who follow their example He creates and opens hell. Adam and Eve committed but one sin, and God expelled them from the terrestrial paradise; they would have perished forever, had not a long and painful penance opened for them the bosom of divine mercy. For one sin Core, Dathan and Abiron were swallowed up alive. How dangerous then is sin? How terrible the injury which it offers to God, since the divine Justice punishes it so severely! How true it is that we ought to shun it as the greatest of evils! I am not astonished to hear a holy father exclaim, "Unfortunate sinner! You lose your immortal soul, and you drink and eat as if this loss concerned you not! By walking as you do in the ways of iniquity, you bear death in your bosom, and yet you weep not, you do not even sigh!"

You carry in your breast a soul dead in the sight of the Lord, and yet you cease not to abandon yourselves to the false joys of the world, though you are hanging over the precipice of hell. Is it faith you want?—or reason?—or do you merely act without reflection? You laugh, you sport, you clap your hands, and yet you are all the while running on to your destruction, and sooner than you imagine you shall reach the brink of hell, where an eternal punishment awaits you,—the brink of hell, where there is no hope, because out of hell there is no redemption! Oh! sinners, when will you be wise,—when will you open your hearts to the truth? Why do you not listen to the tender invitations of your God and the remorse of your own conscience? How good it would be for you to repent, to fly to the throne of mercy, where converted, you would be absolved, replaced on the road to heaven, and rendered capable of one day attaining the unutterable happiness which inundates the saints in the mansions of the eternal God!

You undersand now what Mortal Sin is, the evils which it brings along with it, the sad effects which it produces. It robs us of all our merits, strips our good works of all their value, makes us enemies of God, incapable, while under its dominion, of doing any

thing pleasing to Him, and meritorious of eternal reward; it deprives our souls of life, by depriving them of sanctifying grace; it shuts heaven against us, and opens for our reception hell with its eternal torments, the bare idea of which should fill us with terror. How richly shall we deserve these chastisements if we still continue to offend God, who, to punish sin, delivered up his own Son to undergo the painful death of the cross! My Brethren, let us take care of our salvation,—of our eternity; and let us be firmly resolved to lose all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all rather than commit a Mortal Sin, or remain at enmity with God; for what doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his soul? There is but one thing important,—one thing necessary,—and that is to save our souls.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XCII.

### ON VENIAL SIN.

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“My son, take heed that thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.”—TOBIAS, iv : 6.

MORTAL sin kills the soul, deprives it of the grace of God, strips it of all its merits, shuts the gates of heaven against it, and plunges it into hell; we must therefore detest it. There is another kind of sin which does not deprive us of the grace of God, but weakens it in us; which does not merit the pains of hell, but those of purgatory and other temporal chastisements, and which but too frequently disposes us to commit mortal sin. This sin, which is called Venial Sin, we must also dread, hate and firmly resolve to avoid. It displeases God,—it is dangerous,—we must therefore shun it; this is a truth of which you will be easily convinced if you will honor me with your attention.

What is Venial Sin? Venial Sin is an offence against God in a light matter, or in a grave and important matter, but without full consent.

We sin venially in two ways. First, through ignorance, incon-

sideration or by surprise, and through a kind of human weakness, which is as it were a species of spiritual infirmity, to which our souls are subject in a state of corrupt nature. The greatest saints were not exempt from these kinds of Venial Sins. In the second place, we sin venially with advertence, with deliberate purpose, knowing well that the actions which we commit are sins. Faults become more grievous when we join the habit of committing them to the will and knowledge of sin. We would be still more guilty, if we fell into these Venial Sins without scruple and without remorse. Would not this be proving that we do not fear displeasing and offending the Lord! Do we not thereby clearly and loudly proclaim that, if we refrain from committing mortal sin, it is more through fear of hell than love of God?

It is above all, when speaking of this last kind of Venial Sins, that I believe myself justified in asserting, that we should not consider them as light evils, but that, on the contrary, we should view them as very great misfortunes. Why so? Because these sins tarnish the beauty of our souls, and render them less pure and less agreeable in the sight of the Lord; because, if they do not cause us to lose divine grace, they at least diminish our fervor; if they do not deprive us of the friendship of God, they gradually weaken it. Venial Sin is therefore a great evil. Why? Because, like mortal sin, it is an act of disobedience,—an exhibition of ingratitude,—a rebellion against God. And who then, asks St. Basil, would dare call that fault light which God detests,—which He has often punished most severely, even in this life, and for which He reserves rigorous chastisements in the world to come?

King Ezechias received ambassadors from the king of Babylon. To give them an idea of his grandeur and power, he showed them his treasures and riches. This was but a Venial Sin of vain glory,—an act of vanity and self-love,—a fault such as we commit every day and which we regard as scarcely sinful before God. Nevertheless, this vanity was very displeasing to the Lord; and, would we believe it, if the Sacred Scriptures had not recorded the fact? The Lord said to Ezechias: “Behold, the days shall come, that all that is in thy house, and that thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon; nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons also that shall issue from



thee, whom thou shalt beget, they shall take away: and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”\* Thus it was that God punished a venial fault,—a slight sin.

But what is this punishment in comparison to the pains which God inflicts upon Venial Sins in the fires of purgatory? The souls whom supreme Justice detains there as captives are holy, are a cherished portion of His flock, heirs to the kingdom of heaven; but they departed out of this world defiled with the stain of Venial Sin, and heaven, into which nothing defiled can enter, is shut against them. One day indeed they shall be received into Abraham’s bosom, but they have first to satisfy the justice of God, to endure awful sufferings. Venial sin is, therefore, however trivial it may be, a great evil, because it offends God, because it attacks God, because it is the evil of God himself. It is therefore never lawful to commit it. No, though, to cure all the maladies that affect mankind, to raise all the dead to life, to convert all heretics and infidels, to deliver from purgatory all the souls detained there, to save all the damned, you were required to commit but the least Venial Sin, you should not commit it,—you should not sully your soul with its stain. To deny this is to renounce your faith. Venial Sin is therefore a great evil, and I may add, that it is an eminently dangerous one. Hear and meditate well on these words of the Holy Ghost: “He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.”† And whither shall be he borne in his fall? Alas! even to the bottom of that abyss where contempt of the law of God and of God himself, reigns supreme. Listen to, and meditate well upon this warning of the Son of God: “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater: And he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater.”‡ Venial Sin, therefore, not only inflicts slight wounds upon our souls, cools the friendship of God toward us, deprives us of certain graces, certain succors, which the Lord wished to grant us, and which would have powerfully aided us to persevere in the practice of our duties; but, by diminishing our fervor and enervating our will, insensibly leads us into mortal sin and drags us toward an unhappy eternity.

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\* 4 Kings, xx: 17, 18.

† Ecclesiasticus, xix: 1.

‡ St. Luke, xvi: 10.

Cast your eyes on those that have become notorious sinners; consider even yourselves, if you are of the number of those who have grievously offended the Lord, and tell me sincerely, did you commence your wicked career by mortal sins? Was it not "by little and little" that you fell into it? "Man never becomes a great sinner all at once," says St. Bernard," it is only by degrees that he reaches the bottom of the abyss of vice, as it is only by degrees that he ascends to the summit of virtue; and our perdition, like our glory, has its principle in little things." Yes, sinners, you begin by committing Venial Sins without scruple, and you end by committing mortal sins without remorse. Our crafty foe uses great caution with respect to a soul yet guilty of small things; he induces it, so to speak, to advance by short steps in the ways of perdition; he fears that he would frighten it, were he first to present to it mortal sin in all its hideousness. But he delays not in obtaining more and more an ascendancy over the will of him who is indifferent to Venial Sin; by degrees he becomes his master, lords it over him, and then, great God! whither shall he go, or rather to what lengths will he not go?

Would to God that there were not but too many examples of this sad truth! Alas! they are to be found everywhere and in every age! See that Christian who delights in railing at his neighbor and backbiting him. He is not, I will suppose, guilty of very injurious raillery or of grievous detraction; he commits as yet only Venial Sins. But he persists in the habit, and behold where it soon leads him. At first, he speaks only of public facts; his censure falls only on some slight defects, which those who listen to him have also remarked in the person of whom he speaks, and against whom it is manifest he entertains an ill feeling. But his ill feelings soon prompt him to give expression to certain tart sarcasms and malicious remarks, which being well seasoned with wit, secure him applause. Nor does he stop here; he wishes to support with the same pleasantry this conversation, which will soon prove fatal to him. He lets escape certain ambiguous words,—words which imply far more than they express. The curiosity of the company is excited,—they wish to know what it is that he seems desirous to conceal,—he is pressed to tell all, and at last, giving free rein to his tongue, he defiles his soul by the blackest detraction, by

the most atrocious calumnies; he reveals what should never have been known and what was his bounden duty to have kept a profound secret. Do we not witness these things every day? Let us give another example. How does it happen that so many young people are lost? By associating with certain persons, who did not appear dangerous; by complying with their requests, which did not seemingly tend to crime. Having obtained this little, the enemy of their salvation soon demanded more, and then venial faults led them into mortal sin,—and to dishonor. How came King David to be stained with two awful crimes? By a mere look. How did Judas become an object of so much abhorrence? A thought of avarice insinuates itself into his heart; he nourished the viper, and it killed him; he is become a miser, a traitor, and the murderer of his God. St. Augustine was right, when he said: “He who does not dread and shun light faults, will not remain long before he becomes guilty of grievous sins.”

Let us then, my Brethren, carefully shun all evil ways, let us never abandon ourselves to sin, however light it may appear, for it still is a great evil; it offends God, wounds His justice, outrages His sanctity, provokes His anger, and conducts to mortal sin. God detests it,—He abhors it. Do you desire to know how much the Lord hates Venial sin? Suppose then, that by an impossibility He were to discover a single one in the angels that compose His court, He would immediately banish them from heaven, and oblige them, before they could reënter, to undergo a humiliating penance. What do I say?—suppose that He were to perceive the smallest stain of the least venial fault in Mary, His own beloved, august Mother, this Queen of Angels and of men, would be compelled to lay down her crown, to descend from her throne, to quit heaven, and to do penance, before she could be reādmited there. Such is the opposition that exists between the holiness of God and the hideousness of sin. Let us therefore avoid all sin, whether grievous or light, mortal or venial. Let us love and fear the Lord, and neglect nothing that may enable us to persevere in His service, and ever remain faithful to His divine commandments; let us love God above all things, and then we shall never offend Him; faithful in small things, we shall merit the happiness of being placed over great things, and of being received into the eternal and unutterable joys of our Lord.—AMEN.



## SERMON XCIII.

## ON THE CAPITAL OR DEADLY SINS.

ON PRIDE.

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“Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words : for, from it all perdition took its beginning.”—TOBIAS, IV: 14.

THE first passion which we discover in our hearts is self-love. Is this love bad? If well regulated it is good and lawful; it is sinful when it becomes immoderate and occasions other sins. This prime mover of the human heart is divided into seven branches or passions, which we call capital or deadly sins; not because they are always mortal, but because they are the heads, the cause, the beginning, the source of other sins. These passions or sins are, Pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, envy, anger and sloth. I intend, my Brethren, to draw for you a picture of these vices, and of the unhappy effects which they produce, that you may conceive a horror for them, and may carefully avoid them. I shall first treat of Pride, which is, as it were, the king of sins, the principle of all offences. What is Pride? Pride is an inordinate love of one's-self, and of one's own excellence, which induces a man to glory in himself, and to set himself above others. This is the idea which St. Augustine gives us, and which we naturally form of it. What else is Pride, says this holy doctor, but the passion and desire of exalting ourselves more than we should? We are, in truth, allowed to love ourselves, to esteem the qualities, the virtues and perfections which God has bestowed upon us, to value highly the talents and advantages with which we are favored, and all the other gifts which we have received from His bountiful providence, provided we at the same time acknowledge that all these blessings are not our own, that they come from God, and that the more we have

received the more should we be modest and humble, faithful and grateful to the divine Author of all these gifts. But this is not the way the proud man acts; he diverts his attention from God to place it on himself, as if he were the source and principle of the benefits which he possesses, and of the merits by which he is distinguished. Is Pride then a great sin? "Yes," answers St. Augustine: "it is the greatest sin of man,—it is the most grievous, the most enormous of all the crimes that ever invaded the world." In fact, the Holy Scriptures tells us that "the beginning of the Pride of man, is to fall off from God: because his heart is departed from Him that made him; for Pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions: and it shall ruin him in the end."\* God requires us to use for His glory whatsoever He has given us, and the proud man abuses all to glorify himself; what injustice! He has the hardihood to encroach upon the rights of God, attributes to himself a glory and an honor which are due to God alone, and dares to place himself upon an equality with his Creator. Can there be any thing more horrible,—more injurious to the divine Majesty? What rashness can exceed this? And must we not then call it a great and enormous sin? Pride is a sin of so heinous a nature that it transformed an innumerable multitude of angels into demons,—it is in some manner the especial sin of the devil, since the devil was the first who committed it by his revolt against the Most High. Therefore Satan is called the prince of the proud. I am not then astonished that the Holy Ghost says that Pride is odious before God and before men, and "he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions: and it shall ruin him in the end." I am not surprised that this sin, which has in an instant changed the splendor of a prince of heaven into the blackness of a demon, should entail the most terrible chastisements on the man who nourishes it in his heart. God has declared that "he who exalts himself shall be humbled" and covered with confusion; because the Lord, who gives every thing to man, and receives nothing from him, can not endure Pride.

Aman, the minister of King Assuerus, was proud; he wished to make all bow before him. He observed that the Jew, Mardochai,

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\* Ecclesiasticus, x: 14, 15.

refused to pay him homage; exasperated at the refusal, he swore in his heart that he would exterminate the nation to which this man belonged. He managed the affair so well that he obtained from the king a decree, by which all the Israelites, throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom, were to be put to death on the same day. He caused to be erected a gibbet fifty cubits high, upon which he designed to hang Mardochai. But God, who watches over his people, changed the heart of the king and confounded the Pride of Aman. The frightful designs of this proud man were discovered, his hypocrisy was unmasked, and he was hung on the same gallows which he had prepared for the pious servant of God.\* “Shame, humiliation and contempt shall overwhelm the proud, and the Lord shall destroy the house of the proud. My son, never suffer Pride to rule you either in your thoughts or in your words, for Pride is the root of all evil.”†

To convince you of this truth, observe the conduct of the proud man. He is full of contempt for his neighbor; he regards him not,—speaks not to him,—treats him only with contempt and censures him with bitterness. He lessens his character,—and calumniates him without pity; he takes a malignant pleasure in lifting aside the veil which conceals from the eyes of the public the faults and defects of his brethren, and he acts thus, because he imagines that he is much better than his neighbor and far superior to him. The proud man is ambitious; in his heart is found an immoderate desire of being distinguished from others, of elevating himself above all,—of obtaining places, honors, and dignities. The proud man is full of vanity and ostentation; he boasts without ceasing of the good qualities which he believes he possesses,—even claims, and very frequently, attributes to himself those which he has not; if he happen to perform a good work, he wishes that it should be known to every body, not considering that the Lord says: “woe to them who do good deeds that they may be seen by men!” The proud man is desirous of shining, hence he goes to great expense; but he contracts debts and never pays them, and even, to procure money, he hesitates not having recourse to cunning and fraud. He has a great opinion of himself; he believes that he has

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\* Esther, vi vii.

† Proverbs.



more intelligence and judgment than others; he supports his opinion against every one,—never yields,—never acknowledges that he is deceived, that he may be in error, or that he ought to be corrected. He is disobedient; he longs to be independent of every body,—he detests the yoke of authority,—he refuses to submit to the advice or the orders of his superior,—he is unwilling to humble himself even before God, and he violates without scruple and without remorse of conscience the most sacred laws of God and the Church. And withal he is a hypocrite; for he seeks nothing so much as the esteem of men,—he tries by all means to appear better than he really is,—he artfully conceals his defects, and affects virtues which he does not possess. In the language of Scripture, he is a white washed sepulchre, which appears to the eyes of men set off with ornaments, but which within contains only bones and rottenness.

Behold, my Brethren, some of the sins which Pride begets. I am aware that the sins of the proud man are not always grievous; but I do not hesitate to assert that, unless he struggle to root out of his heart this dangerous vice, it will taint all his good deeds—it will plunge him, without shame and without remorse, into the greatest transgressions; for thus God punishes Pride. To humble and chastise the Pride of the haughty, the Lord permits them to fall into the most dreadful crimes; and St. Paul says, that God delivers them up to the shameful desires of their hearts, and abandons them to a reprobate sense and dissolute passion.\*

My Brethren, let us not be like “to a man beholding his natural countenance in a glass: for he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.”† You see here the hideous portrait of Pride; no doubt, it fills you with horror, and you are firmly determined never to allow this vice, so odious to God and so hateful to men, to gain admittance into your hearts; you are resolved to expel it, if it has already entered into your souls. Yes, do so, for you have no right to be proud. Why indeed should you be proud and self-conceited? What have you to be proud of? Is it the advantages which you possess? These advantages are either corporal or spiritual; if corporal, they are

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\* Romans, i.

† James i: 23, 24.

fleeting,—evanescent, and must one day end in corruption; if spiritual, it is not in this life, but in a better one that they must be judged. Do you tell me that you are rich,—that you have money? If so, you have very many duties which you are bound to fulfill: you must become the protectors of the unfortunate,—the servants of the poor, or you cease to be Christians; and, if you do not act thus, take care how you say: “I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing:” for before God “thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”\* But you have talents; your talents come from nature, and God is the Author of nature: you must not be proud then of what you have not made. You belong to a distinguished family,—you occupy a high place in society: but all men are born and die in the same way; when God shall judge them, it will matter little whether they have borne on earth the crown of a king or the wallet of a beggar. Let us therefore cease to ask: “who is the greatest amongst us?” Remember, that whatever you are and whatever you possess, you have received all from God, and that from him to whom much is given, much will be required. Let us pass by as unworthy of our notice, whatever is fleeting, and never attach our hearts to any thing earthly; let it be our sole endeavor to use wisely and piously, for the salvation of souls and the love of God, and in all humility, the riches and the goods, which the bounty of God has intrusted to our care. Let us recollect that the Lord resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble; let us bear in mind that he who exalts himself, shall be humbled, and that he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

AMEN.

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\* Apocalypse iii: 17.

## SERMON XCIV.

## ON AVARICE OR COVETOUSNESS.

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“Take heed and beware of all covetousness.”—ST. LUKE, xii : 15.

IT is not without reason that in the series of sins which are called capital or deadly, Covetousness is placed immediately after pride ; for these two base and unchristian-like vices, both consist in selfishness. Pride is the selfishness of vanity ; the proud man wishes to obtain all honors. Covetousness is the selfishness of cupidity ; the avaricious man longs to possess all riches. Both are equally ridiculous and inhuman. I have already told you what pride is and the sins which it occasions, and I doubt not that you entertain a true aversion for this vice ; I wish to-day to inspire you with the same sentiment of repugnance toward the vile sin of Avarice.

What is Avarice ? According to St. Thomas and St. Bernard, Avarice is an excessive and immense love of the goods which we possess or which we wish to possess. We are avaricious when we love and desire to excess the goods of this world, such as gold, silver or lands ; when we amass them with too much avidity, when we preserve them with too much trouble of mind, when we are too much afflicted at losing them, or fear too much expending them. From this definition of Avarice, it is easy to conclude that the poor as well as the rich may be swayed by this vice ; and, in fact, they are guilty of Avarice, if they preserve in their hearts a too ardent desire of possessing the goods of this world, if they set their hearts upon them as rich people very often do, who make a god of their wealth, and worship it. This definition of Avarice also teaches us that it is only the inordinate love of gold, silver and earthly goods which merits the name of Covetousness, and that this odious name must not be given to the moderate desire of acquiring and preserving these things. The father of a family, who moderately desires and struggles to amass sufficient money, to acquire sufficient



means that he may provide for his family in a becoming manner, and honorably establish his children in the world, must not be called avaricious. There is nothing inordinate in his desires; he is not therefore covetous. Neither must the man be taxed with Avarice, who is sparing in his dress, maintenance and pleasures, and by his economy lays by some of his earnings, not from an excessive love of money, but that he may be enabled to live in comfort when he is no longer able to work, and that he may not stand in need of the necessaries of life, should he happen to be visited by infirmities and sickness.

You must be careful and not confound Avarice with a good and wise economy, which is reason applied to the management of the affairs of this world; Avarice is a vice,—economy is a virtue. Does not common sense tell us that to waste our substance, is to commit an act of folly; that it would be even criminal to spend in prodigal extravagance, for outward show, what is useful in supplying the wants of our family? It is not what is needful for our support, but our superfluities that should become the patrimony of the poor. An economical man, without being covetous, without having an excessive love for money, wisely manages his fortune, and neglects no opportunity of enlarging it; but he makes use only of means, just in themselves, and which religion and conscience approve;—he does not detach his heart from God to fix it on riches. He knows that the Holy Spirit has said: “Take heed and beware of all Covetousness;” seek nothing that is not just; and if heaven bless his efforts, it will be his desire to please God, by practicing good works,—he will be always ready to aid his brethren,—he will be the father of the poor and the afflicted. He will not refuse when called on to contribute what he can toward feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, adorning the house of God, or carrying the glad tidings of salvation to nations yet groping in the darkness of error,—he is not then avaricious. God grants him wealth, and he blesses the Lord. Should He take it away from him, he will still bless His holy name.

Do you wish to know the covetous person? Is it that man in whom the desire of obtaining money is the sole motive of every thing he does,—of every thing he undertakes; who rejoices immoderately in the possession of temporal goods, and who is excessively afflicted

at the loss of them. It is the man who gives nothing, or scarcely any thing of his superfluities to the poor; who so ardently loves what he possesses, and grasps it with such tenacity, that you must, in some measure, resort to violence to determine him to buy necessities for himself; it is that man who is never satisfied with the wealth which he has acquired, with the gains which he has made, who always longs to make them greater, and whose craven appetite for money, in the language of Holy Writ, never can be satiated.\* His desires have no bounds; and to appease them,—to satisfy his infernal thirst for gold, God alone knows what trouble he gives himself, what pains he takes, what means he employs, and how many crimes he commits.† “There is not a more wicked thing than to love money: for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale:”‡ because of his injustices, and wrongs, and injuries, and divers deceits; and nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. The desire of riches is so deeply rooted, and so insatiable in certain avaricious souls, that they have no regard to laws or the dictates of justice. They defraud,—they overreach others,—they steal,—they are ever employed in hoarding up gold, without troubling themselves whether they do so lawfully or unlawfully. They are resolved to make a fortune, to increase their capital and extend their possessions; and to attain their ends, they employ every means, without stopping to inquire whether they are guilty of injustice or not. If such a one is a judge or a magistrate, it matters little to him on which side right and justice are found,—he pronounces in favor of him who lodges the most money in his hands. Is he a merchant, he will be found using false weights and measures, although God has said: Wo to you that have in your house diverse weights, a greater and a less!§ He sells as good, merchandise which is bad, damaged, and full of defects, which he takes great care to conceal. If we believe himself, there is no man more just than he is in his dealings,—he even swears to what he asserts; but in the eyes of God, who sounds his heart, this man is a cheat and a thief. Is the avaricious man a mechanic, a laborer or a domestic? He is ready to do every thing, to commit all kinds of sin and crime; there is no artifice, no means, no matter how mean or

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\* Ecclesiasticus, v. † Deut., xxv. ‡ Ecclesiasticus, x: 8, 9, 10. § Deut., xxv

shameful, which he will not employ to obtain money, and increase his property. To procure gold, the covetous man will avail himself of false witnesses,—he fears not to perjure himself, and has no dread of committing theft or robbery. What do I say? If to attain wealth, he will have to rob the poor, plunder the orphan, defraud his ward, or ruin the heart-broken widow,—he cares not,—he shuts his eyes,—stifles the pangs of conscience, and advances boldly to perpetrate the crime. The covetous man will never let loose his grasp on what he holds; so great is his apprehension of being stripped of his ill-gotten goods, that he can never resolve to restore what he unjustly possesses; he pays neither his creditors, his servants, nor the unfortunate tradesmen who happen to work for him. But God shall vindicate the cause of his oppressed poor. “Behold, the hire of the laborers, who have reaped your fields of which you have defrauded them, crieth out; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”\*

Oh you, who inordinately hunger after riches! do you never reflect that it is not of superfluities, but of the very necessities of life, that you deprive that family, whose earnings you withhold. See these children,—they are naked,—they tremble with cold and hunger; their poor mother weeps, and the unhappy father has no bread to break to them,—no raiment wherewith to clothe them. Well then, rejoice every night, because forsooth you have been able to add a few more dollars to your already well filled coffers; hoard up your gold,—hoard it up, and forget that “the laborer is worthy of his hire.” But the day will come when you shall hear these appalling words: I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; wicked servant, as long as you did it not to one of these least ones, neither did you do it to me: cruel and heartless man, for you there shall be no mercy during all eternity.†

St. Anselm remarks that St. Paul was right when he said that riches are the devil’s net, by which he catches the souls of men and drags them to perdition. In the acquisition of them they are a net, for rarely are they obtained without recourse being had to unjust means. In the possession of them they are a net, for the posses-

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\* St. James, v : 4.

† St. Matthew, xxv.



sors too often make of them a god, and erect an altar to them in their hearts. But most of all are they a net in the hour of death; for then they hinder the miser from making the restitution which God, his conscience and justice demand. In that hour does the devil use all his efforts to bind fast this soul and precipitate it into the abyss, still clinging to its unjust possessions. Without restitution there is no pardon. Foolish man! behold, God required thy soul of thee, and,—it is lost! For whom are the riches which you have amassed? Poor miser, thou hast wearied thyself in vain in the ways of iniquity! Hear the voice of thy heirs who laugh at thy sordid parsimony, and remember their unwilling benefactor only with the contempt and the derisive joy which thy folly deserves.

Yes, my Brethren, Covetousness is an egregious folly,—it is a crime; “take heed therefore and beware of all Covetousness.” And how shall you avoid this vice? Have confidence in the paternal care of divine Providence. God watches over you,—He will provide for your wants. Do you not experience this truth every day? Is it not your God who says that you are dearer to Him than the birds of the air, that sow not, neither do they reap, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them? Labor then,—for such is the will of God; but be not solicitous about to-morrow; let not your hearts be troubled with thoughts of the future,—it will come to you accompanied by the blessings of heaven. Cease esteeming and desiring riches so much. You have a Father who loves you and who will never forsake you in the hour of need. If God had placed you in abundance, would you be happier? Perhaps, you would have become misers, and the miser is a perpetual torment to himself, for the more he acquires the more he wants; he suffers in the very possession of what he loves, and in his abundance he is poor.

Love your neighbor sincerely and charitably as you love yourselves, and you will avoid Avarice, which inclines us to do to others what we would not be willing that they should do to us; you will not seek to enrich yourselves at the expense of your brethren; you will be open, frank, just and equitable in your dealings with them; you will not be insensible to the miseries of the poor; the poor man will love to come to you, while he shuns the miser as carefully as the rich man avoids a thief; you will remember every day that God has given you riches, that you may make a good and holy use

of them, and above all, that you may be enabled to give bread to those who need it.

“Take heed and beware of Covetousness” by considering that, as you brought nothing into the world, so you shall take nothing out of it. Gold and silver can neither preserve you from death, nor add one day more to your life. The days which God grants to each one of us are very short, and, when we shall reach the fatal term, the greater our wealth shall be, the greater too shall be our pain in dying and leaving all behind. Remember that too great an attachment to the good things of this world, causes us to lose all love for the goods of the life to come,—the only lasting,—the only true goods,—the only goods worthy of our labor and our love. If the Lord has favored you with the goods of fortune, be not attached to them, but raise your hearts above them, so that, as St. Francis of Sales tells us, in the midst of riches, we may be without riches. You can not serve two masters,—God and mammon. Prefer God, the source, the principle and the Author of all riches. In Him is found every thing beautiful, great, rich and precious, and He will give himself entirely to you in heaven, where He will be your reward exceeding great. “What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” To redeem this soul, gold and silver were valueless; it required the blood of a God. Esteem your soul then, endeavor to fit it, to enrich it for heaven, and you will avoid Avarice, the inordinate love of the false goods of earth; you will avoid Avarice, that odious and dangerous vice; you will love and practice charity, the divine virtue which makes you loved by God and opens for you heaven.—AMEN.

## SERMON XCV.

## ON LUST OR IMPURITY.

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“God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.”—1 THESSALONIANS, iv: 7.

HAD we a perfect resemblance to our forefathers in the faith,—to the Christians of the primitive Church, whose lives were so holy, and whose hearts were so pure, I might say: it is not necessary for me to speak of the third capital sin to those that come here to listen to the word of God; they detest this vice, and, following the advice of St. Paul, the degrading sin of Lust is “neither known nor named amongst us; every one of us knows how to possess his vessel in honor and sanctification; not in the passion of Lust, like the Gentiles, who know not God;” and we delight to recall to mind that, “God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.” But, alas! my Brethren, such is not the case in our unhappy times; Lust, far from being unknown, is the cause of the ruin of an innumerable multitude of souls, and the greatest efforts must be made to prevent this frightful evil from spreading further. May I obtain this salutary result by once more telling you how dangerous and how criminal is the vice of Lust.

What is Lust? Lust or Impurity is a criminal affection for pleasures contrary to the virtue of Christian chastity; it is an inordinate desire for the unclean delights of the flesh. It is this sin which sensual men wish to regard as a light fault, and which they represent to us as the necessary and inevitable effect of human frailty. It may indeed be that it is inevitable for those proud people who, in their criminal presumption, lean only on their own strength, and neglect the fountains of grace and virtue, prayer and the sacraments, which our divine Lord has established to render us strong and holy; but it is not the less culpable in them. No! Lust



is not a light fault ; to punish it, the Lord destroyed the world by a deluge, when all flesh had corrupted its way ; to punish it, He commanded fire from heaven to consume the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, the cry of their immodesties having ascended to His throne. The Lord knew well the weakness of these men, nevertheless, He did not hesitate to break them with a sceptre of iron ; it was by their own fault they had become vessels of impurity, and consequently horrible in His sight ; and, therefore, it was that He rejected them. Man must possess his body in sanctity and honor. We, especially, my Brethren, should comprehend perfectly the importance of this obligation, and the enormity of the sin of Lust. We have the happiness of being Christians ; at the holy font of baptism, we became members of the body of Jesus Christ, formed of His flesh and bone ; in the Holy Eucharist, we received this divine Son of the heavenly Father, and St. Cyril says, that our bodies belong more to Him than to ourselves. In Baptism and at Confirmation, the Divine Spirit descended into our hearts, and we became His living temples. I ask you now, my Brethren, is impurity a slight fault ? Christians, when you give yourselves up to the base and infamous vice of Lust, what is it you do ? I dare not repeat to you the words by which the Apostle stigmatizes your crime, I content myself with saying that you dishonor the body of Jesus Christ,—that you make it the instrument of your shameful actions,—that you defile and profane the temple of God, and introduce abomination into the sanctuary. What an awful sacrilege ! Can we be astonished at hearing the Apostle declare that fornicators and the unclean shall never enter into the kingdom of God ? For, how could he who dares to drag in the mire the image of God and the body of Jesus, be admitted among the number and receive the rewards of the blessed inhabitants of heaven ?

Lust is a grievous sin, a very grievous sin ; it is certain that all offences in this matter, however trivial they may appear, are always mortal when they are perfectly voluntary and committed with advertence. Do not deceive yourselves, by supposing that none but heinous crimes of Lust lead to perdition ; the reading of a bad book, an impure song, and immodest conversation, an action, even a thought, a simple desire of the flesh, is enough to ruin your soul and cause its eternal damnation. Has not our divine Saviour

declared : " Whosoever shall look on a woman to Lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart ?" \*

" Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God ; but woe to those who give themselves up to Lust, for this dangerous enemy will not be alone in the heart where it reigns ; this impure spirit will be accompanied by many other spirits as wicked as itself. In fact, the number of sins to which Lust gives birth is almost infinite ; it is the fruitful parent of a multitude of evils.

God and nature command us to respect, honor and love our parents. Every day, our good behavior toward them, and the constant practice of obedience should prove to them that we really know how to appreciate what they have done and still continue to do for our bodies and our souls, to promote our present as well as our future welfare, and render us happy for time and eternity. This is a sacred duty which we owe them. But the unfortunate slave of Lust shamelessly and continually violates this duty. He was once mild and docile : why is he now neither submissive nor docile, nor kind, nor affectionate toward his parents ? Why is he so arrogant, so haughty, so insolent, so hard-hearted to his father and mother ? Because they perceive his misconduct and the vile acts to which he is addicted, and they wish to correct him. These good parents endeavor to bring him back to the ways of virtue, and he gets angry, becomes indignant at their reprimands and reproaches, and rebels against their authority. His shameful passion has got the command over him, and the voice of nature and the voice of God no longer have power over his soul ; he knows not how any longer to love his father and his mother. Beside, he becomes slothful and detests labor. He is addicted to lies, is deceitful, full of cunning and of artifices to elude their vigilance and escape their notice. He must have money to spend in his debaucheries, and will steal it whenever he has an opportunity of doing so. If he be accused, you will hear him utter false oaths and call God to witness his innocence ; he does not even fear to cast suspicion on his brothers and sisters, or on the poor servants who have never known injustice.

The husband and wife must love one another, mutually help one another, labor together to increase their store, and assist each other

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\* St. Matthew, v : 28.

in educating their children. Now, can the husband and wife who give themselves up to a criminal passion,—to Lust, can they discharge these sacred duties? From the moment that one of them forsakes the path of virtue, trouble and division enter into the house, and this couple, recently so intimately united, pass their days in hatred, disputes and quarrels; they insult, outrage and deceive one another. They have no care for their children; it matters little to them whether they turn to good or evil. They neglect their business, squander their property, spend their means and scatter money with a profuse hand on the wicked accomplices of their guilt, and often, after having scandalized their neighbor by their disorders, end their career in the most frightful misery. Alas! my Brethren, have we not seen the husband and wife employing poison and the dagger to sever the sacred tie which impeded the accomplishment of their wicked designs? There is no crime, no transgression which this violent passion does not beget: it causes duels, suicides, murders, assassinations and parricides! Children have been known to steep their hands in their father's or mother's blood to secure the indulgence of this shameful vice.

But you say: we never go so far; we may commit sins against purity, for we are weak; but these awful crimes which you describe, we never perpetrate. I believe you, my Brethren, and I hope that such horrid deeds will never take place among you: that we shall never see here duels, murders, infanticides or assassinations. But shall we not behold another misfortune,—an irreparable misfortune, one which fills me with terror and with grief,—final impenitence? There is no sin that more effectually darkens the mind and hardens the heart than the vile sin of Impurity. As soon as the fire of passion gets possession of a man, he can no longer see the Son of justice, who is Jesus Christ; he can no longer direct his conduct according to the holy maxims of the Gospel. The animal man has no taste for the things of God;\* he desires only the earth and the pleasure which he finds in the mire of his uncleanness; his soul and his eternity concern him little. If he approach the sacraments, it is through hypocrisy, to veil the baseness of his conduct, or through human respect, and to escape the reproaches of his

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\* 1 Corinthians.



father, his mother, or some other person whom he is forced to regard. He goes to confession, but conceals this shameful sin; he heaps sacrilege on sacrilege, and continues doing so to the end. On his death-bed his last confession and communion are new sacrileges added to a life of sensuality and debauchery, and his impure soul falls into the hands of the living, all-holy God,—black with infamies.

I entreat you, my Brethren, to harken well to these words of St. Bernard: "As soon as an immodest thought enters your mind, resist it with vigor, and it will leave you; but, if you harbor and dwell upon it, it will produce in your hearts a pleasure fatal to your innocence; this pleasure will lead you to consent, consent to action, action to habit, habit to necessity, and necessity to eternal death." Oh no! let it never be thus with you; remain constantly virtuous, fly sin, keep yourselves removed from all occasions of danger, dread improper words, impure conversations, and continue faithful to this admonition of St. Francis de Sales: "Have no intercourse with persons whose morals you know to be tainted by sensuality, above all, when impudence is joined to Impurity, which is almost always the case. There are basilisks which carry their venom in their eyes and in their breath." Pray to the Lord, for it is only by His grace that you can be chaste and pure; beseech Him then that He may give you grace, strength and wisdom, and that you may never cease to love the angelic virtue of holy purity.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XCVI.

### ON ENVY.

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"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?—ST. MATTHEW XX: 15.

THE Gospel tells us that the father of a family went out at different hours of the day, and each time hired laborers, whom he

sent into his vineyard to work. When evening came, he gave to all the same wages. Those who had worked all day began to murmur, and the master of the family said to them: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will?" Can not I do as I please with my own? "Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" Why are you jealous and envious of the advantages which I grant to these people? Are they not your brethren, and must not they give bread to their children? If I see proper to confer favors on them, you ought to rejoice at it; but Envy is in your hearts, and hence you murmur and complain. Envy reigns everywhere, in every state, in every condition. May God grant you grace to detest and dread this sin, and to drive entirely from your hearts this vice, so odious and so fruitful in sin.

What is Envy? Envy is a sadness which a man feels at his neighbor's success, or a malignant joy which he entertains at the misfortunes of others, considering his neighbor's success as something opposed and hurtful to his own honor and interest, and the calamities of others as a benefit to himself.

Envy is a sin which of its nature imparts death to the soul. It is an unchristian and inhuman vice. It places a man in a state of perpetual opposition to the holy will of God; it renders him hard-hearted, insensible, and incapable of henceforth loving his neighbor or of loving himself.

The envious man sets himself up in opposition to the will of God: he is unwilling to submit to the order which divine Providence has established in the world. Jealous of others, he finds fault with them, frets, is troubled and vexed at their happiness; does he not hereby attack and censure God himself? Does he not blame His designs, insult His wisdom, and in some measure, accuse Him of partiality and injustice in the distribution which He has made of the goods of this world? "With the Lord there is no exception of persons," and He disposes all things with supreme wisdom; let man therefore adore the ways of God: is it not lawful for Him to do what He wills? Is man's eye evil, because the Lord is good?

Our divine Saviour says to us: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

True charity is the distinctive mark of the Christian ; it is this that renders us like unto our blessed Lord ; it is this that makes us so many images of God, who is essentially goodness and charity. Therefore, the Apostle St. John bids us : “ Love one another, for this is enough.” But what is the office of this virtue of charity, so holy, and, at the same time so necessary, that “ he who has it not abides in death ?” St. Paul assures us that it consists in rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those that weep. Why ? The Apostle answers, because we are all members of one and the same body, whose head is Jesus Christ. In the human body, there exists so great a union, and so great a sympathy between the members that compose it, that, if one of them suffers, all the others take part in its pain ; and, if it be sound and healthy, all the others rejoice with it : in like manner, the Christian ought to experience a sentiment of sadness and affliction, whenever any misfortune or affliction befalls his neighbor ; and he should rejoice at the happiness and prosperity of his brethren as he rejoices at his own. These are the worthy, noble and generous sentiments which charity inspires. The envious person knows them not.

There is no possible alliance between light and darkness ; there is still less between Christian charity and the inhuman vice of Envy. Instead of rejoicing at the happiness of his brother, the envious man is saddened and afflicted at it ; instead of helping to raise him up, he labors to undermine him in his business, and to thwart him in his undertakings ; instead of wishing, he fears and dreads his success. The Holy Spirit says : “ Be ye joyful with them that are in joy ; be ye sad with them that are in sadness.” No, says the envious man ; but, on the contrary, be full of joy when your brother suffers, be sad when he is in joy.

The envious man therefore can not love his neighbor ; can he at least love himself ? No ; for he harbors in his heart a passion, of its own nature baneful to his health, which embitters his whole existence. Night and day, the sight and remembrance of the prosperity and happiness of others pursue him, torment and gnaw his heart. He loves not himself, for he robs his soul of its finest ornaments ; he strips it of every sentiment of generosity and benevolence ; deprives himself of the friendship of heaven,—rejects the grace of God ; and, at the same time, renders himself unworthy



of the esteem and love of his fellow men. The envious man therefore is his own executioner.

In the heart which Envy governs, there is no peace with God, no conformity and submission to His holy will, no love of the neighbor, no true love of self. St. Augustine says, that Envy is a diabolical sin, and St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians\* tells us that envious persons deserve eternal death, and that they who are guilty of this vice "shall not obtain the kingdom of God," for Envy despoils man of every virtue, and drags him into a vast number of sins no less odious than itself. It begets detractions, calumnies, injustice, persecution, and even sometimes leads to murder.

The envious man frequently has recourse to the most odious insinuations; it costs him little to calumniate and blacken the character of him whom God blesses and favors. A man enjoys the confidence of the people, and his business is in a flourishing condition: turn a deaf ear to the malicious hints of his neighbor who envies his success, and seeks, by insidious words, to cast upon him unjust suspicions: he will speak to you of frauds in weights and measure, and of cheating in the quality of the goods that you buy, but hearken not to him. Another man, active, vigilant and laborious, aided by the Divine protection, succeeds in his enterprises, and advances rapidly in the road of fortune. Take care of what the envious man, who is jealous of his prosperity, will say about him. "I would like to know," he says, "how this man gets rich so soon; we must suspect the honesty of him who can make a fortune in a few days." Another happens to be elected or appointed to a post of honor. The envious man strips him of every noble quality of mind and heart, ridicules him and holds him up to public contempt, as a person possessing a head without brains, and a heart destitute of every generous impulse. A fine and noble deed has been performed,—and every one applauds it; but these encomiums press heavily upon the heart of the envious man. He can not deny the fact, but he will impeach the intention. In this work, so noble and praiseworthy, he discovers only self-love, hypocrisy, ambition, the desire of praise, or other motives still more reprehensible. Thus do the envious scatter the tares and cockle of

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\* Galatians, v.

detracton and calumny among the good grain in the field of the father of the family ; nor will he stop here. Often are his projects cruel, frightful and horrible, and to accomplish them, he scruples no means, however base and criminal ; he resorts to cunning and violence, to larceny and robbery, and, as the Scriptures says, injustice fills his hands. To glut his detestable passion, will he not, at least, dread the shedding of blood ? Alas ! history is full of the crimes which Envy has produced. It was Envy that nerved the arm of Cain to strike down his brother ; Envy cast Joseph into a pit to die, and then united with avarice to sell him into slavery ; it was Envy, in a word, that drove the Jews to perpetrate the most awful of crimes,—the murder of the Son of God. Justly then did St Cyprian call Envy the source of every evil, the origin of murders, and of an infinite number of sins. Hence, Envy imparts to the countenance of those whom it possesses a dark and sinister appearance,—a sad and touching effect of the Divine foresight, which thus warns us to avoid the envious.

Divine Providence rules and governs all things in the world. Caprice has naught to do in the distribution which He makes of the goods of earth. The Lord portions them to His children, conformably to the decrees of His eternal wisdom and bounty ; to some He gives much, to others less, but always in accordance with His wise and adorable views. It can not be otherwise, for God is just and loves us all. Let us therefore ever respect the ways of the Lord, and take care not to be jealous of our neighbor, because of the riches which God gives him. Why are you not contented with the state in which you are ? It is the hand of God that has placed you there. If you had received more, perhaps you would be lost. Do you not know that men frequently become avaricious when they possess rich treasures and vast revenues ? Do you not know that the avaricious are insensible to the miseries of the poor, that they never open their hands to help their suffering and starving brethren, and that they are lost for all eternity ; for it is written, “that the covetous shall never enter the kingdom of heaven ?” Never desire to possess too much wealth,—it is dangerous, and God will require much of him to whom much has been given. If you are poor, you may desire to obtain a sufficiency to promote your earthly comfort, for this is reasonable ; but labor to acquire it

instead of envying the goods which others have obtained by their toil. If God wishes to retain you in mediocrity, remember that the Holy Ghost warns us that it is there we can most easily work out our salvation. Learn therefore to be satisfied with what you possess of the goods of this world, which you must abandon at the hour of death; and enrich your souls, for you can do so, with those goods which will follow you into eternity: that is to say, be just and good, pious and charitable, love God and your neighbor; be patient in trials and afflictions, benevolent in prosperity and in every condition of life, according to your means; these are the true goods,—the only true riches, by means of which you can purchase a place in the kingdom of heaven.—AMEN.

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## SERMON XCVII.

### ON GLUTTONY OR INTEMPERANCE.

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“And take heed to yourselves, least perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.”—ST. LUKE, xxi: 34.

EXCEEDINGLY dangerous and subtle is the artifice, which the devil, the enemy of our salvation, has recourse to, when he induces a man to make use of the very blessings he has received from Almighty God to offend His divine Majesty. Bread and wine,—food and drink were given to man to enable him to live, to preserve his body in health and strength, that he might, for a longer time, render to his Creator the worship and homage which are due him. But the infernal spirit ceases not soliciting us to abuse these gifts in gratifying our sensuality, to convert these treasures of the bounty and liberality of our heavenly Father into treasures of sin and crime, by using them to excess. It is in this the sin of Gluttony consists, of which I propose speaking to you in this instruction, and against which our divine Saviour seeks to forewarn us when He says: “Take



heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."

Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. The most dangerous kind of gluttony is drunkenness, which, nevertheless, is also the most common, in the country and in cities, among the rich as well as the poor. We are Christians, and we should all say with St. Augustine: "Thou hast taught me, O Lord, to take my food as men take medicine, that they may recruit strength, may recover and preserve the health of their bodies." We should never lose sight of those beautiful words of the Apostle: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do; do all things for the glory of God."\* We will follow this advice of the Holy Ghost, if we take nourishment only according to our wants, and not to gratify our sensual appetites. But there are people, who, after having abundantly satisfied what the body and health demand, are not yet content; they eat and drink without necessity,—they eat and drink even to excess, nay, they even materially injure their health, and render themselves incapable of discharging the indispensable duties of their state; they drink until they are drunk,—until they are deprived of the use of reason. Very often such persons as these commit mortal sin by their excess.

Are these excesses criminal before God? Who can doubt it? Is not this a vice diametrically opposed to nature and to man's vocation? You have been taught from your childhood this truth, which has passed into a proverb: that we must not live to eat, but eat to live. What! is not that degrading vice a crime, which robs man of his noblest ornament and deprives him of the most precious gift which he has received from the bounty of his Creator? What is this gift: what is this ornament? It is reason. It is it that renders man like to the angels, and that constitutes his chief and greatest glory. He should make every exertion to preserve it in all its integrity, while, on the contrary, by abandoning himself to intemperance, he not only consents to what weakens it, but very frequently destroys it forever, as sad experience daily proves. He degrades himself, even to the level of the brute beast. How disgraceful it is for a rational being to reduce himself to such a state that we can not perceive a difference

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\* 1 Corinthians, x: 31.

between him and the beasts of the field! nay, he even sets himself below them, for instinct prevents the beast from going to that excess, which reason does not hinder the drunkard from reaching. In fact, says St. John Chrysostom, when animals eat and drink, they take only what is sufficient to satisfy their wants, while man transcends all bounds and goes even to excess. Is it not a shame that he, to whom God has given an absolute empire over all inferior beings, should place himself beneath them,—that the slave should become master, and the master slave? The Holy Ghost refers the sluggard to the ant to learn from it prudence and wisdom: permit me to send the glutton and drunkard to learn from the brutes the rules of temperance, and that they alone give themselves up to a ravenous propensity, that they alone seek sensuality in the necessity of eating and drinking, and find weakness, infirmities, sickness and death, where they should have found vigor, life and health. Is it not true that Gluttony kills more than the sword, and that it engenders and develops the germ of far the greater number of diseases which afflict and destroy men? Who then can imagine that this vice is not a crime? Does it not render us odious to God, deprive us of His grace and love?—is it not a vice which the holy doctors of the Church call the father of iniquity, the foe of virtue, a voluntary demon, the shame and disgrace of the human family?

Be not deceived, my Brethren, this is a most criminal vice, for the Lord has cursed it. “Woe to you, that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness: . . . therefore, as the tongue of the fire devoureth the stubble, and the heat of the flame consumeth it; so shall their root be as ashes, their bud go up as dust.”\*

The Almighty declared by the mouth of His Apostle, that drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of heaven. “Take heed to yourselves,” says the Holy Ghost, “lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.” The liquor, which you drink in such quantities, will enter “pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk.”†

Justly then, my Brethren, should we detest this vice, which degrades and brutalizes man, destroys his health, shortens his days,

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\* Isaias, v : 22.

† Proverbs, xxiii : 31, 32.

renders him odious to God, and finally plunges him into the abyss of eternal misery, after having led him in this world through all the wicked ways of sin and error.

St. Chrysostom was right when he compared drunkenness to a stagnant pool full of pestiferous water. As it engenders serpents and other venomous animals, drunkenness begets all other vices. You know it well,—the fatal passion of Intemperance is the fruitful cause of disputes and quarrels. Too often the meetings of friends degenerate into bloody fights, and the halls of drinking saloons are transformed into battle fields.

The drunkard is also the slave of lust. “Wine is a luxurious thing, says the Holy Ghost, “and drunkenness riotous: whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise.”\* When the body is surfeited with eating and drinking, the virtue of the soul is destroyed by lust. It is among drunkards that you will find youths without modesty,—faithless husbands and wives,—old people without shame, dishonoring their grey hairs by this abject vice.

The drunkard is also irreligious. See this young man, who once had the courage to fulfill all his duties, and lead a truly Christian life. Now he renounces prayer, neglects Mass, forsakes the sacraments, forgets the truths of religion, abhors sermons, and no longer adores God. St. Ambrose says, sobriety is the mother of faith, and Intemperance the mother of infidelity. But the drunkard will say to us: “despite my excesses, and however criminal they may appear to you, I still preserve my faith and hold on to my religion.” I answer in the words of St. Paul: You serve not the Lord Jesus Christ,—you serve your belly; that is your god, to it you render your worship, to it you offer the sacrilegious homage of your affections; you have no religion!

But there are yet other evils arising to the drunkard from his drunkenness, and as chief among them we may reckon the neglect of all the duties of his state, and the ruin of his family. What, indeed, can we expect from the father, who gives himself up to excessive drinking, and spends his time in the beer shops, instead of being engaged at his work? In place of providing for his children and enriching his family, whatever property he may have

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\* Proverbs, xx: 1.



inherited is squandered in folly, and his earnings spent in paying the debts contracted by his Intemperance. He soon becomes both unable and unwilling to work, and spends his time with idle vagrants, who support themselves by dishonesty and crime. Yes! drunkenness also makes a man dishonest. To frequent the drinking house, the drunkard must have money, and there is no act so base, none so unjust that he will not commit to obtain the means of gratifying his passion for drink. Therefore it is that we so often hear of habitual drunkards being caught in the very act of stealing. The Holy Ghost says: "A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich;"\* shame and confusion shall entirely overwhelm him. Yes, shame on the drunkard! shame on the slaves of this infamous vice! For, see, my Brethren, see; in that house are children in need of the commonest necessities of life, and dying through want. They are hungry, cold and naked, while their father is at the very same moment in the tavern, brutalizing himself with drink. They weep, poor children, with their unfortunate mother, but their tears shall soon give place to terror. Listen! do you not hear in the distance an approaching noise? It is the sound of blasphemy and imprecations, which announces the return of the father. The door is opened: he enters with a volley of curses and blasphemies. All tremble,—all fly before him. O ye drunkards, how great is the crime you commit! and how great the scandal you give your children! perhaps they will imitate you, will walk in your footsteps, and one day will make you pay dearly for your present criminal conduct! Have you never seen a drunken and unnatural son drag his father by his gray hairs through the mire, and trample beneath his feet the breast that nourished him? Look closely at that intoxicating cup, which you are about to drink, and you shall see in it the bitterness of discord, enmity, hatred, disputes and fights; you shall see there tears,—blood,—your ruin for time and for eternity! and will you still dare continue in your mad career? Will you never be converted? Not, I suppose, while you are in health. Will you even at the hour of death? So rare is the conversion of the drunkard that it almost deserves to be counted a miracle. And how many are the drunkards who die in a state of complete insensibility,

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\* Ecclesiasticus, xix : 1.

whose souls awaken only at the foot of God's judgment throne! What an awful death! What a terrible judgment!

O my Brethren, remember, all the days of your life, that it is written in the Holy Scriptures, that drunkards shall never possess the kingdom of God.\* On whom does every misfortune fall? The Divine Spirit says: on them "that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups."† Recollect the evils, the vices, and the crimes, the shame and infamy which flow so abundantly from this dreadful vice; dread it,—never contract the habit of drinking, and avoid the society of habitual drinkers. Christians, remember that it was to condemn and expiate your unhappy excesses that the Son of God willed that His burning thirst should be cooled with vinegar and gall, upon the cross on which He died for you. From the height of that cross He still says to you: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."—AMEN.

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## SERMON XCVIII.

### ON ANGER.

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"Be not quickly angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool."—ECCLESIASTES, vii: 10.

INTEMPERANCE in eating or drinking is an odious vice, exceedingly displeasing to God, and deserving our most sincere detestation. As long as you bear in mind what I told you in my last instruction, you will never give yourselves up to this abominable sin. I intend speaking to you to-day of another vice still more common, and which seems even less dreaded, since people often urge it as an excuse for the sins which they have committed. The words of Holy Writ, which I have just cited in my text, have already told

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\* 1 Corinthians, vi.

† Proverbs, xxiii: 30.

‡ Ecclesiastious, xix.

you that Anger is an act of folly, and that it rests in the bosom of fools. But it is still worse, my Brethren, for Anger is often a very grievous sin, one which merits a place among the capital sins, because it is the origin of many others grievously offensive to the Lord.

What is Anger? Anger is an inordinate emotion, which induces us to repel with violence what displeases us. Commonly speaking, Anger is the effect of a passion which sways the heart, and which is excited at the sight of any obstacle which opposes the fulfillment of its desires. The proud man breaks out against whatever wounds his vanity or ambition; the miser is provoked when any thing disturbs his projects of gain; sensual persons are exasperated whenever they are thwarted in their pleasures. This anger is not according to God; on the contrary, the Lord condemns it. He wishes that we who have the happiness of being called, and who are in reality His children, should practice charity toward one another, and that we should look upon one another as brethren. Hence, the Apostle says to us: "Bear with one another, and you shall fulfill the law of God." Christians, we are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and we should all walk in His footsteps. "I came into the world," He says, "that you may have a model. I have given you an example, that you may imitate, and do what I have done. Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." We must, therefore, labor strenuously to approach as near as possible to this divine model; "I beseech you therefore," with the illustrious Apostle St. Paul, "to conduct yourselves in such a manner, that you may be worthy of the high state to which you have been called; in all things, practicing humility, meekness, patience, supporting one another in charity." Now, he that gives way to Anger and opens his heart to the fell spirit of revenge, acts in direct opposition to what God commands, he refuses to follow his Saviour, and despises the admonition and exhortations of the Holy Ghost. He can no longer be considered a disciple of Him, who loved us so much, that He wished to die for us, and was pleased to be led to the cruel punishment of the cross like a lamb to the slaughter, without opening His mouth. This thought alone, dear Christians, should be sufficient to make us detest Anger. But you will understand still better how frightful is this vice, when you consider the sad effects which it produces and the sins which it causes us to commit.



I wish that an angry man could see himself in a glass, when under the influence of his passion. The change in his features would make the degradation of his soul so manifest, that he could not help being completely ashamed of the disgusting spectacle which he would present to others. See that man whose Anger has got the better of him; his eyes are inflamed, his lips tremble, he foams from the mouth, his hairs stand erect, his face seems on fire,—his words are furious,—sharp,—half-broken,—all his body is in convulsive movements. And is this, O my God, a Christian? is this, my divine Lord, one of Thy disciples, —one of Thy brethren? He is not even a man, but a raging beast, ready to tear every thing to pieces, if he be not caged. He thirsts for vengeance; not having it in his power to obtain it, he invokes the demons to assist him, and in his mad rage outrageously blasphemes the holy name of the Omnipotent God. Impious wretch, he would tear the Almighty from His throne, to sacrifice Him to the abominable spirit which governs him.

What a frightful spectacle, my Brethren, and how well calculated to horrify every man who has any idea of his own dignity, or any fear of the Lord! But not only does Anger render a man like a savage and ferocious animal, it also destroys the peace and tranquillity of families; it sows broadcast the seeds of discord, hatred and enmity between citizens of the same country, between inhabitants of the same city, between neighbors, even between children of one and the same mother. Not unfrequently it causes the most crying acts of injustice,—it strikes and wounds,—it gives rise to murders and homicides. The angry man hears not what is said, sees not what takes place before his eyes, and has but an imperfect knowledge of what he himself does. The angry man is capable of breaking in pieces his most precious things, he is disposed to outrage what he ought most to venerate, to insult him whom he should most revere, to slay the very being who is nearest and dearest to his heart. Yes, truly, there is blood in the ungovernable passion of Anger!

In the very earliest dawn of history, I behold the earth crimsoned with blood, and it is with innocent blood, shed by a brother's hand. Cain, jealous and frantic because God has rejected his sacrifice, murders his brother Abel through anger. David delivered Saul from the proud Philistines who daily came to insult the army of

the people of God; David bravely fought for his country and his king, and victory crowned his efforts. Saul ought to have joined his people and united his voice with those of his subjects in celebrating the glory and triumph of the young warrior. On the contrary, he is incensed,—he gives himself up to Anger, and wishes to pierce the heart of his liberator.

The sweet delights of peace and harmony reigned in the happy family of the holy old man, Tobias; it seemed as if nothing could mar their happiness: but, behold, the wife of Tobias gives way to an unjust fit of anger, undeservedly reproaches her husband, and peace and happiness at once disappear. “The Anger of man worketh not the justice of God.\* A passionate man provoketh quarrels: and he that is easily stirred up to wrath, shall be more prone to sin.”†

The inspired penman tells us that the passionate man shall become guilty of many criminal acts toward his neighbor, and that he shall be his own murderer. In truth, violent outbreaks of Anger impair the health, engender diseases, abridge life and cause sudden deaths. Alas! how many people are there, whom my prayers have accompanied to the grave, who now sleep among the dead, and who might have been still living had they subdued their Anger? But the constant indulgence of this furious passion broke down their constitutions, and sent them to a premature grave. God grant that their souls are not lost, that all feelings of hatred and revenge were extinguished in them in their dying moments, and that they have departed out of this world in sentiments of perfect charity! But I tremble when I consider that the Holy Ghost places Anger, dissensions and quarrels among the number of those sins which shut heaven and exclude men from the kingdom of God.

But is Anger always sinful? Is there not a just and reasonable Anger? Yes, my Brethren, there is a just and lawful Anger,—it is that which proceeds from a well-regulated zeal for the honor and glory of God and for the preservation of virtue. It is of this Anger that St. Paul speaks, when he quotes these words of the royal prophet: “Be ye angry, and sin not.”‡ This

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\* St. James, i: 20.

† Proverbs, xxix: 22.

‡ Psalms, iv: 5.

is not only not reprehensible, but it is even worthy of our praise, and would to God that all Christians, and chiefly those who have authority over others, were animated by it! We should not then witness so many excesses in the world,—we should not then hear of so many scandals, curses, oaths and blasphemies. This justifiable Anger, which is not a violent burst of passion, but a holy indignation produced in the soul by the desire of doing good, we would like always to see in you, fathers and mothers. What happy results would it not produce! It would restrain your children within the bounds of duty,—it would banish bad habits from your houses, and God would be feared, loved and honored in them. For, imitating the example of Jesus Christ, you would never permit vice to soil your abodes, which ought to be the temples of the true God, and houses of prayer. Were you to act thus, “you would be angry, and sin not;” on the contrary, you would do what God commands you, and He would approve of your conduct, and bless you; your Anger would be far different from that which our Saviour condemns, when He threatens with a severe judgment those who keep Anger against their neighbor.

My Brethren, let us bear in mind those words of our blessed Lord: Be not Angry against thy brother; be quickly reconciled with thy adversary. “If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother.”\* Forgive your brethren. “You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.”† Live in friendship with all. If it be not possible for you to prevent certain motions of Anger from rising in your mind, at least, endeavor to have command enough over yourselves to repress them. Remove at once, if you can, from the object which excites your Anger; keep silence as long as the fit of passion lasts; give time for reason to return to its throne, for your feelings to grow calm, and judgment to resume its empire over you. Be Christians, resigned to the holy

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\* St. Matthew, v.

† Idem, v.



will of God, convinced that, without this holy will, nothing takes place in this world; and then, the injustice of the wicked shall not provoke you to Anger,—calumny shall cease to exasperate you,—you shall remain immovable amid all injuries, because you will recognize in the offence which you receive from your fellow-creature, only the chastisement which our common Father inflicts upon you for your sins; you will leave revenge to the Lord, and will never wish to depart from the path of sweetness, forgiveness and goodness, which your Saviour and your model has trod before you.—  
AMEN.

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## SERMON XCIX.

### ON SLOTH.

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“He that tilleth his ground, shall be filled with bread: but he that followeth idleness, shall be filled with poverty.”—PROVERBS, xxviii: 19. “Idleness hath taught much evil.”—ECCLESIASTICUS, xxiii: 29.

SLOTH is unquestionably a low and contemptible vice; though at first sight it does not appear to have the odious character which distinguishes the other capital sins. It is only when we have thoroughly examined it, that we are compelled to admit that it is a detestable vice,—a dangerous vice,—a vice which causes the destruction of thousands of souls, and which is justly ranked among the number of the capital or deadly sins. You will acknowledge the truth of what I advance, my Brethren, if you listen attentively to what I have to say about it.

What is Sloth? It is a species of dullness and sluggishness of the soul, which gives us an aversion for virtue, and tends to prevent us from accomplishing the duties common to all Christians, or those which are peculiar to our state of life. It is a mortal sin whenever it causes us to fail in the discharge of any important obligation. There is a natural Sloth, which inclines us to idleness and a dislike for labor. There is a spiritual Sloth, which inclines us to neglect

our duties as Christians, and against which our Saviour forewarns us when he says: "Watch, for you know not at what hour the Lord shall come." The two kinds of Sloth are sisters, but they do not always dwell together. In fact, a person may be vigilant and active enough in the things of this world, who has but little care for those of the next; he will consider no labor too great for him to undertake, to advance his worldly prospects and increase his fortune; but he is sluggish, negligent and faint-hearted in what relates to the service of God and the salvation of his soul. He neglects nothing to secure himself against the evils of time, while he does nothing to avert those of eternity. This Sloth is directly opposed to that love which God wishes us to have for our souls. It is directly contrary to the first and greatest of the commandments, which is the loving and serving of God alone. Does that man truly love himself who has no relish for virtue and for heaven? Does he love God with his whole heart,—he who is careless, indifferent, and even cold in the performance of what God commands? Far from it. Therefore it is that the Lord declares that he can not endure such, and that they will be rejected by him. If it is one of the first duties of us Christians to serve God with an increasing zeal, to love Him daily more and more, never to look back when once we have put our hands to the plough, but unceasingly to advance in the ways of perfection, acquiring every instant new merits, and heaping up riches for that day when we shall be summoned to our eternal country; if this is our duty, how can that man be loved of God, and what must he expect from Him,—who, in the service of the Lord, passes his life in sinful idleness, in forgetfulness of his soul and his eternal salvation; who has no care to increase in virtue, piety and perfection; who neglects to discharge the most sacred obligations of his state, and murmurs when he has to do what his divine Master commands? What can he expect from God? Let him learn it from the Lord himself; by the mouth of His Prophet Jeremias, He says: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently!"\* Our blessed Lord condemned the servant that neglected to improve the talent which his master had intrusted to his care; He commanded that the barren

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\* Jeremias, xlviii: 10.

fig-tree, and every tree that brought not forth good fruit, should be cut down and cast into the fire. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently!" Heaven grant that this awful threat may never be realized in the case of any of the souls that the Lord has confided to my care! Would to God there was not even one slothful person among us! But, alas! it is not one, but many we have in our midst, who seldom or never think of God and their salvation; who have no taste, no zeal, no care but for temporal things; who run after these with the greatest speed, while they are slow, sluggish and heavy in pursuit of the most important of all affairs,—that of their eternal salvation; who are never ready, never disposed, when there is a question of taking part in a good work; who neglect the duties of their state, fail to comply with the commandments of God and His Church, because they find them hard and difficult, or who observe them only against their will. Alas! too many are the Christians who are slothful with respect to God and their souls! What a multitude who suffer the days consecrated to the Lord to pass by unprofitably! Who content themselves with hearing a low mass, through human respect or custom; who assist at it with distracted minds, without devotion and without prayer, always finding the service too long, and fearing lest the minister of God should ascend the pulpit to address them some few words of exhortation; so great is their desire to hasten back to their business, their amusements, their wordly pleasures, or their sinful gratifications in the tippling shops and taverns! Is not the number of those unworthy and criminally slothful Christians very great, who, though heaping sin upon sin, and swallowing down iniquity like water, yet are not in the least disturbed at their unhappy state, and delay their conversion without scruple? They resist the voice of the Holy Ghost calling them to repentance; they return not to God, but go on amusing themselves in the paths of vice, and when they present themselves, as they one day must, at the door of the bridegroom's house, must they not expect to hear Him say: "I know you not?" They lay up for themselves a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath; and when shall that day come? perhaps it will be to-morrow!

These also should be reckoned among the slothful,—who shun and hate those courageous people who reproach and reprimand them for their sins. The Holy Ghost marks them, so to speak, with the



seal of reprobation, for He says: "The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed."\* Such a one sneers and laughs at simple and devout persons, mocks their piety, and turns into ridicule the religious exercises which they practice: but the Scriptures tell us that there is in hell a class of miserable wretches, who reproach themselves with having mocked at the just and considered as a folly the regular life which these led on earth. Eternally shall they repeat, with unutterable grief: "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor; behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."†

Very grievous, my Brethren, are the sins which spring from Sloth: it produces forgetfulness of God, of salvation and eternity; it begets contempt for the commandments, for the word of God, and for the practices of piety,—it keeps men in the way of perdition,—it is the mother of hard-heartedness and of final impenitence. It is therefore with reason that a holy father calls Sloth the bed and pillow of the devil, and that the Holy Ghost compares it to a wild and uncultivated ground, full of bad weeds, and whose entire surface is covered with thorns. It is a dismal solitude, for the soul in which it prevails possesses no virtue;—it is a dreary desert, full of horrors, for sin abounds there. Surely, my Brethren, you will dread and shun Sloth, since you wish to please God and gain heaven. Thank God, there are in this world many fervent Christians,—many excellent models of every virtue. No doubt, the days in which we live are evil, still there is a goodly number of people, who endeavor to fulfill God's holy will. I set them before you as an example for your imitation. Yes, my Brethren, imitate these true Christians, who piously and fervently assist at the prayers of the Church, who glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, who delight to come frequently to purify their souls in the salutary waters of penance, and to receive strength by partaking of the bread of angels in the holy Eucharist. Imitate these true disciples of the Saviour, who are meek and humble of heart, who readily forgive their enemies, who love their neighbors, and have compassion for the afflicted and the poor. Imitate these devout parents who take

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\* Proverbs, xxix: 1.

† Wisdom, v: 4.

good care of their families, who rear up their children in a Christian manner, assiduously watching over their domestics, and establishing the reign of religion and virtue in the hearts of all under their charge. Imitate them, be like them, laborious, be like them, vigilant, and employ in a holy and worthy manner, the days of your life, the number of which is fixed, and for the good or bad use of which you must shortly render an account. Let us carefully husband those precious moments which so rapidly glide away, and which shall never more return. Let us be servants faithfully and constantly occupied with the work of our heavenly Master,—busy about the salvation of our souls, that, when the Lord shall come, we may be able confidently to address Him in His own divine words: “I have glorified Thee upon earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”\* The Supreme Ruler is just and equitable,—He will render to each one according to his works: sorrow, shame and confusion to the slothful and negligent servant; peace, happiness and glory to the vigilant and faithful. Endeavor then, my Brethren, all of you, to be of the number of servants whom the Lord loves and rewards,—it is in your power. If you fear that your strength will fail you, pray, and God will pour into your hearts His graces and blessings, fortitude and wisdom. Thus, supported and strengthened, you shall do good,—you shall avoid evil,—and you will deserve to be one day addressed in the consoling words: “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord.”—AMEN.

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\* St. John, xvii: 4.

## SERMON C.

ON OUR INCLINATION TO SIN.

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"For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth."—GENESIS, viii : 21.

It is from the mouth of the priest that the faithful must learn the science of salvation. It is our duty to make known to you the law of God, that you may observe it; the beauty of virtue, that you may adhere to it; and the deformity of vice, that you may detest and shun it. I believe I have fulfilled this duty by giving you a complete course of instruction on Christian doctrine. Do you desire now to love and practice truth and virtue? Do you desire to detest and avoid vice and error? Do you, in a word, desire to combat and overcome the natural Inclination to Sin which exists in your hearts? If you do, make good use of the means which I am about to point out to you, and you shall certainly attain your desire.

To combat and overcome this invisible power, this violent inclination which too often draws us away from God, and drags us into sin, we must first of all be convinced that virtue is of all things the most necessary for us, that it is a duty incumbent on us to endeavor to be saints. Now, is this the sentiment of the generality even of Christians? Alas! how often do we not hear people say: "We are not angels, and can not be expected to fulfill such difficult duties. What harm can there be in following inclinations which are founded in our very nature? We must live, must get on in the world, and this we never can do as long as we confine ourselves within the narrow limits of strict virtue. What we do, multitudes of others also do, and why should we not live like the rest of mankind? Beside, temptations are so frequent and so strong, that it is impossible always to resist them; and our passions are so violent, that there can not be much harm in sometimes yielding to them." Such, my Brethren, are the thoughts which, in some form or other,



we but too often hear expressed by many who call themselves Christians. Can we be astonished that, while such sentiments prevail, young men are to be found without shame, and young girls without modesty; grown men unjust, and old men irreligious? They deny that virtue is a duty, and consequently make no effort to practice it: but this is the language of vice and folly, and not that of truth and wisdom.

No, my Brethren, we must not obey the voice of our senses and our passions, we must not follow our animal instincts, as if we were beings void of intelligence; we must not make ourselves like to the brute. We are not permitted to use all means, whether good or bad, just or unjust, to procure for ourselves what we suppose to be useful or agreeable to us in this world. The Almighty has given us reason and conscience, that we may know how to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil; and the better still to preserve us from being deceived, He has revealed to us His divine will, and by the religion which He has established, made known to us the laws we must fulfill. "Be ye holy," He says, "for I the Lord your God am holy;" and again, "be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Thus too by the mouth of His Apostle St. Paul, He assures us that it is His desire that we should all become saints; that we should contribute to His glory, by advancing in the practice of good works; should put off the old man conceived in sin, and put on the new man created to His own divine image.

Virtue is therefore a duty incumbent on us. He who denies its necessity, manifests the corruption of his heart, and is condemned by both reason and conscience. He belies himself and speaks thus only because he wishes to lead an easy life. He never would give expression to such language if, entering into himself, he were seriously to consider the day of his death, and the eternity which awaits him. He certainly will not speak thus, when he is called on to leave the world. He shall then find truth in his heart and in his soul. On his bed of death, surrounded by his children, he will say to them: "My children, be wise and virtuous: this is your first duty; love your religion, and observe its precepts, for thus alone can you attain happiness. Fly vice, practice virtue, such is the will,—such is the command of God. Walk before the Lord in justice and holiness; resist your passions, struggle against the

dangerous inclination which incites you to sin, for we are not beings of a day, who appear for an instant and then fall back into nothingness. We were made to live forever; eternity awaits us; eternity unceasingly tells us that we should not live here below like the brute beasts, slaves to base instincts and shameful passions. We must do good, and practice virtue if we desire to be happy in this world, and eternally happy in the next."

But, my Brethren, is it possible for us to overcome this dangerous enemy, which we bear about in our own hearts? It is, provided we are men of good will. Good and evil are set before us, and we can choose either, for God created us free. Man can love vice and live in sin, or he can choose virtue and live in the practice of good works. All depends on his own will. But innumerable is the multitude of those who want this good will, and few desire to do violence to themselves. It is so much easier to give reins to our passions, to sully our souls with a mass of iniquity, and then to say: "How violent the inclination which leads us to sin! How powerful the empire which passion possesses over our hearts! How seductive the charms of bad example! Who can successfully contend against such enemies!" Who can contend against such enemies! The true Christian,—who arms himself with a firm and energetic will. "But man is so weak!" Yes, man is weak, but he can render himself strong, he can give himself an iron will against sin and passion: all he needs is prayer, for prayer is an omnipotent act, which places the strength of heaven at the disposal of man. "If any of you," says the Apostle St. James, "want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly.\*" "Ask and you shall receive," said our blessed Lord, and "if you ask the Father any thing in my name, He will give it you."† Pray, and be assured that God, who is just and faithful, will not permit the temptation to be above your strength.

Nevertheless, my Brethren, we must not neglect to join watchfulness to prayer. Fear presumption, for God resists the proud and lets confusion come upon them. "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."‡ "Work your salvation with fear and trembling."§ Such is the advice which the Spirit of God gives us

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\* St. James, i: 5. † St. John, xvi: 23. ‡ St. Matt, xxvi: 41. § Philippians, ii: 12.

in the inspired volume. Distrust yourselves then; avoid all places and occasions which endanger your virtue; shun the company of such as would lead you into sin, and keep far from you every thing which has been, or which you have just reason to fear, will be for you a source of dangerous temptations. Assuredly, we need not be surprised at the frequency of our falls, if, though conscious of the secret and powerful inclination which drags us toward sin and vice, we nevertheless dare seek those occasions wherein we have so often before suffered shipwreck, and place ourselves in circumstances wherein it is in a manner impossible for us not to yield to passion. Does not the Holy Ghost tell us, that he who loves the danger shall perish in it? If then you desire not to become the slaves of sin and vice, be on your guard against every thing calculated to lead you to evil; take care not to add to the natural corruption of your hearts by excess in eating or drinking; avoid and detest the reading of those books or papers wherein religion or morality is set at naught; shun, as you would a plague, the pestiferous breath of those men whose lips distil the poison of impurity or impiety; renounce for ever that society, that connection, those pleasures and diversions which have so often proved a rock of scandal to you. Furnish no new fuel to the fire you would extinguish. Is it your desire to weaken and subdue in yourselves the inclination which leads you to sin: refuse it then all nourishment; keep far, far away from you every thing capable of inspiring bad passions in your souls. No sacrifice is too great to escape the misfortune of an unhappy eternity. Our Saviour bids us pluck out an eye, if it is a source of scandal to us, for it is better for us to go to heaven with one eye, than to hell with two.

Still, my Brethren, however vigilant, wise, prudent and careful of our salvation we may be, we shall never be able to divest ourselves of all Inclination to Sin. The Apostle tells us, that to avoid all the occasions of sin, we should leave the world. Let us then ever remain justly distrustful of ourselves; let us remember the presence of God, and never forget that He loves and recompenses virtue,—that He detests and punishes vice. In times of temptation then, let us say: “To preserve the grace of God and gain heaven, I must fight and conquer.” Call on the Lord for light, strength



and succor, and like St. Paul, you will be able to do every thing in Him who will strengthen you.

It is thus, my Brethren, that we ought to struggle against the bad inclination,—against the passions and corruption of our nature; it is thus we must overcome “the imagination and thought of our heart, which are prone to evil from our youth.” Be convinced that the practice of virtue is an indispensable duty, the violation of which is a crime, since the will “of God is our sanctification.” Let us be persuaded that we can remain faithful to virtue, and can surmount the vicious inclination of our hearts, if we are men of good will; that all we need to obtain this good will and strength to carry it into effect, is to ask them of God. Let us be prudent and distrust ourselves; let us shun as far as possible the dangerous occasions of sin; let us never lose sight of our last end, death, judgment, eternity, and we shall never sin; but shall ever remain virtuous until God calls us to heaven, where there is neither sorrow, nor pain, nor temptation, nor dangers, but eternal happiness.—  
AMEN.

THE END.















THOMAS, H.J.

BQT

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One hundred short

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sermons.

THOMAS, H.J.

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One hundred short sermons.

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